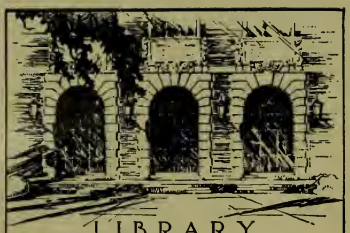
TREGARTHEN

By

G. Norway



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TREGARTHEN

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TREGARTHEN

BY

G. NORWAY

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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TREGARTHEN.

CHAPTER I.

LADIES AT BREAKFAST.

'Dear, dear!' said Miss Selby, putting aside the letter which she had been reading at the breakfast-table. 'Dear, dear! whatever will Mrs. Frank do next!'

'Why, what is it now?' asked Miss Letitia, anxiously, and two other sisters laid down tea-cups and toast to sympathize.

'Well, you know how ill they have all been this winter, and now they have taken

the house at Polzeath for the summer. How they possibly intend to cram themselves into that, and in what disregard of all propriety they anticipate living, who can say!'

'Mrs. Frank must really be mad,' said the youngest of the ladies.

'But I would like to see all the children,' sighed gentle Miss Letitia, who was an invalid, and could never leave home. 'I never saw more of them than Mabel and Horace, and what lovely children they were!'

'Frank says that the two youngest, Stephen and Amanda, are the prettiest of all,' said Miss Rose.

'Not the youngest now,' lamented Miss Selby. 'You forget the baby, the "tithe offering," as poor Frank calls her in his absurd way.'

'I did forget the poor little thing for a moment. Ten of them! and all living.

What a misfortune! Are they *all* coming to Polzeath, Elizabeth?'

'Yes, all. Indeed, I believe that they are there already. So inconsiderate of Mrs. Frank, giving us no time to remonstrate, but coming, hand over head, in this wild way. How people will talk.'

'What does Frank say? Do let me see his letter,' said Miss Rose.

'I will read it aloud, so that we may all hear it at once,' replied Miss Selby. 'It is just one of his harum-scarum letters.'

The letter ran thus:

'Dear Sister,

'You are likely to see the whole boiling of us soon. Like a swarm of locusts we contemplate alighting upon the dear old neighbourhood, and ravaging the land. Mab does not regain her strength at all satisfactorily, and her tithe

offering is always squalling. I have painted her white phiz rather successfully, bending down over the brat. She is hanging on the line in Burlington House, where our dear friends, the public, are going cracked about the "Invalid," but it is time for her to give up the pose, now that it has answered the purpose. Half of the chickens have had measles, scarlet fever, and things. Dorothea has grown weedy over them, Felicia looks like a tallow candle, and Steenie's eyes are as big as moons, while his face is in danger of vanishing altogether. He is of no use at all as a model under these aspects, and the big boys must pick up tone before we launch them upon next year's exam. work. I am afraid to think of our doctor's bills, so we are running away from town before they come in.'

Here followed a humorous pen and ink sketch of himself and his wife, with a

procession of boys behind their father, and girls following their mother, like an old family monument; but each laden with a bundle hung to a stick over the shoulder, running hard towards a neat little map of Cornwall in a corner.

'We have taken the house at Polzeath, and Mab engages to pack us all in there somehow. She judiciously remarks that it seems to be a locality where sketching abounds, and no dress at all is needed! So you may expect to see us, in detachments, at some early date, in very free and easy guise. Meantime, I am, now and ever,

'Your loving brother,

'Frank Selby.'

'What a rigmarole he writes,' sighed Miss Rose. 'I do hope that Mabel will not be *very* unconventional. What will people say if she does anything too wild.'

'Do you remember the time when you and I went to stay with them, Letitia, when Horace was the baby?' asked Miss Selby, lifting up mittened hands, in horror at the thought.

'Yes, eighteen years ago! I could go about then,' sighed Miss Letitia.

'I have often told you, sisters,' said Miss Selby, 'of the extraordinary things which they did then.'

'Do you remember the day,—a Sunday too,—on which they made an exhibition of Frank's pictures before they went to the different galleries?' asked Miss Letitia.

'Yes! Mrs. Frank trimmed up a table with fringe ripped off her best winter gown, and spread a lace pocket-handkerchief over the top, under a brown jug of daffodils! A common jug of cloam, from the kitchen, sisters!'

'It really looked very pretty, though,'

said Miss Letitia, 'and the lace and fringe were none the worse.'

'How silly you are, Letitia! None the worse, indeed! I believe you would actually encourage them in their follies if you were able to go there much. Perhaps you approved of Mabel's putting her wedding veil over the arm-chair, to hide the mark of Frank's head, and tying it up with his red silk neck-tie!'

'I don't know. I only thought of how often his poor dear head must have been tired to have left such a mark upon the chintz in little over a year,' sighed the more sympathetic lady, unheard among the indignation of one sister, and the laughter of another.

'She actually dressed up the lay figure in our mother's white Indian shawl, which we thought so much of giving to her, and Frank went into ecstacies over what he called the grace of its folds!'

'Poor dear! I remember it well: She pinned it up into Greek drapery, so cleverly; and, just as some very fine people were coming up the stairs, Frank dropped a filthy huge rag, all daubed with paint, upon the pedestal where it stood, exactly in sight. I can see her now, turning pink up to the roots of her pretty hair, as she caught it up, and hid it beneath the skirt of the figure. A little corner of it peeped out after all, and what a story Frank made of it at the supper to his young artist friends when all was over! How they roared with laughter when he undid the red neck-tie, and betrayed all her contrivances!'

'Such a scene as it was!' pursued Miss Selby. 'Half of the young men were smoking; and some drew caricatures of the whole; and Mabel gave them nothing for supper but toasted cheese and ale; and not one of them wore evening dress, though

we were three ladies present! But *that* was not the worst!'

Miss Selby sank her voice to a whisper.

'Frank, *actually*, brought little Horace in, to show to Sir Frederic and Lady Clarinda Mowbray, with nothing on him but his little shirt! *Nothing* more,' repeated she, emphatically; 'and there was that beautiful embroidered frock which we all took such pains to work, and the new blue sash and shoes we bought, never put on at all! Nothing on but a shirt! And he called Lady Clarinda's attention to the dimples on the baby's legs! Such indelicacy!'

'But Sir Frederic gave dear Frank an order to paint him a picture of the child just like that,' murmured Miss Letitia, 'and paid him twenty pounds for it. And a sweet pretty thing it was, too.'

Miss Selby was too full of her woful experiences to heed.

'And when I spoke to him seriously about the indelicacy and impropriety of his conduct, pointing out to him, with all kindness as his eldest sister, that no one would think well of him, even as an artist, for scorning the simple rules of refinement and delicacy, he would only laugh, and say that Lady Clarinda would give her best bonnet for such a baby as that! I gave him up from that moment. His house was no place for *me*, and I have never been in it since.'

'And Frank has never brought his wife here since that unfortunate visit when May was the baby!' said Miss Rose. 'I hope all will go off more pleasantly this time.'

'I hope he will create no such scandal here,' said Miss Selby. 'London is a dreadful place. People may not mind such things there, but what would our neighbours think *here!*'

'Here' was a small country town, in the near vicinity to which was a particularly fine place called 'Tregarthen,' the seat of the Grenfell family. Sir Theophilus and Lady Sarah Grenfell were far too grand to visit in this town. The utmost condescension which her ladyship showed was in consenting to patronize a ball or a bazaar now and then; but even this gave an air of aristocracy to the place, and caused its humbler inhabitants to consider themselves more 'genteel' than those of less favoured localities.

One exception, and one only, did these exalted personages make. The Misses Selby, daughters of a former clergyman of Tregarthen, lived in a pretty cottage not far from the entrance gates of the Tregarthen park. They were descendants of a good and much respected family, and Sir Theophilus had enlarged and decorated their house, given them the privilege of

using his plantations, into which he made them a private pathway, and treated them in every way as privileged people.

Lady Sarah did yet more. Miss Rose Selby was her intimate friend, her almoner, her resource in all her small difficulties, and the pleasant companion of all her dull days.

This gave the sisters much importance among their limited acquaintances, and, never having lived anywhere but in this parish of Withiel, they naturally considered no family could be grander than that of Tregarthen, no affairs of greater consequence in the world, and its verdict one beyond which was no appeal.

The rector who had succeeded their father was an old bachelor; and no ladies resided very near to them of position sufficient to share in their consequence. Sir Theophilus objected to selling a rood of his land for building purposes. New

people were *anathema maranatha* to him; his conservative character was opposed to all change.

Bitter had been the trouble to the Misses Selby when their only brother, the youngest and most beloved child of their honoured father, gave up all intention of becoming a clergyman, for which profession he was being educated; and, when Dr. Selby's death put him into possession of his small fortune, devoted himself to art. That real genius and steady hard work had achieved a success which justified him in this course, did not make much difference in his sisters' eyes. They lived too much out of the world to estimate his reputation justly; and he was always 'Poor Frank' to them.

'Poor Frank' might have married well. He was extremely good-looking, and possessed of a happy geniality of manner and disposition which made him a general

favourite. A lady of family and considerable fortune would, it was tolerably certain, at one time, have forgiven his palette and mahl-stick, and placed him above the necessity of wielding them.

But Frank fell desperately in love with a lovely young governess, owning a very small portion. He married her in defiance of all remonstrances; and, at the end of nineteen years, was as much in love with her as ever, and fairly content to rise but slowly in his profession, painting pot-boilers and illustrating books, to maintain and educate his numerous children.

If the Misses Selby forgave him, from a sense of duty towards him as their only brother, they never had honestly forgiven 'Mrs. Frank.'

CHAPTER II.

VISITORS AT THE COTTAGE.

A LITTLE later, on that same morning, the Miss Selbys were settling in to their usual avocation, when a donkey-cart appeared at their garden-gate.

It was but an ordinary, common sort of little vehicle, painted green; but driven by a tall girl in dark serge and summer print blouse, who bore the unmistakable stamp of gentle breeding, though her brown hair had become somewhat loose from the wind, and her shady straw hat was decorated with a great bunch of wild roses, carelessly

stuck in through the ribbon which encircled it.

A fine-looking man, of about five-and-forty years, accompanied her: wild roses fastened into the belt of his Norfolk blouse, and a huge mass of honey-suckle upon his knees.

Even the donkey had wild roses decorating its ears; and a pile of ferns, branches of sycamore, lovely with early crimson leaves, and all manner of hedge-row treasures, lay at the bottom of the cart.

Seeing the ladies seated in the wide bay window, the gentleman stood up in the cart, waving his hat in the air; he then sprang out, and helped the girl to descend.

'Why, it is Frank!' cried Miss Rose.

'So it is. What could possess him to come laden up with all that rubbish?' said Miss Selby.

'I suppose that is one of our nieces,' cried Miss Jane, hurrying out to welcome them.

Frank did not seem in any way conscious of guilt, as he strode up the little pathway to the glass porch of the cottage. His big cheerful voice rang out before him :

'Well, sisters, you got my letter, and are prepared to see us, I suppose. How well you are all looking! Elizabeth,'—kissing his eldest sister,—'you are a perfect evergreen. Hey! ho! the holly! And Janey, and Letitia. My dear soul,'—assuming the dialect of the country,—''ee be quite peart! And Rose, 'ee du look for all the world like one of the blossoms that thiccee maid of mine have made me pick.'

'We are very glad to see you, brother,' said Miss Selby, 'but what possessed you to drive through the town in that way?'

'In what way?' asked Frank, looking down over his person. 'Why, Mab insisted upon our making ourselves presentable before we came to see you, and looked

us both well over before she would let us start. What is wrong with us?'

'Papa, papa,' laughed the girl, 'I told you that my aunts would think us crazy. But, auntie, the hedges do look so exquisite to us, after the London streets, that we could not keep our hands off the flowers. What a lovely drive it is! I had no idea that your lanes were so charming!'

'Does not this Duchess of mine look like Queen Summer with her pink shirt and roses?' asked the unabashed Frank. 'I would like to paint her, in the character.'

'Which of our nieces are you, my dear? What is it your father calls you?' asked Miss Letitia, taking the girl's hand, and drawing her to sit beside her upon the sofa, with a kindly embrace. 'Take off your hat, and let us look at you.'

'I am Mabel,' said her niece, complying

with the request, 'but, as that is mamma's name, they always call me the Duchess May. Horace gave me the name, he is so fond of the poems, you know. But there is no one less likely to ride the castle wall, I fear.'

Her smile was very sweet as she turned her brown eyes upon her fragile-looking aunt.

'No, there is nothing romantic or heroic about this young woman,' said her father, shaking his head sorrowfully. 'Nothing at all. Her chief accomplishment is making currant nobbies. *There* she does shine, I will say that of her, poor dear! You don't happen to have a nobbie or two about you, do you, my dear, for a starving father?'

'No, papa; I trusted entirely to my aunts to relieve such pangs of hunger as might overpower you,' laughed she, merrily.

'Lunch is coming in,' said Miss Selby, taking this *au pied de la lettre.*

'For that, and all His mercies, the Lord make me truly grateful,' said her brother, piously. 'They starve me terribly, sister,' turning to her, with a piteous look. 'I have been obliged to drive here this morning on purpose to annex a loaf of bread. Can you help me to one?'.

'Mamma sent her love,' said the Duchess. 'She was not well enough to come herself, but she thought that you could advise me as to what butcher and baker we ought to employ. We have to take back some groceries and things, for we did not bring much from town with us, only a few stores for immediate use. And, Auntie Rose, she thinks that you may be able to recommend a servant to us. Some strong, active girl, who can do plain cooking. We only have nurse with us, but we girls help a great deal ourselves.'

'She makes *all* the currant nobbies,' murmured her father, pathetically; 'and eats them afterwards herself.'

Miss Selby was pleased with the deference thus shown to them.

'I will go into the town with you, my love, after luncheon,' said she; 'but here comes the tray. Some ham, Frank?'

It was a dainty little refection, perhaps more suited to elderly ladies than to a hearty man, but hospitably set forth according to the unexpected demand upon their larder.

A chicken, spatch-cocked; a small knuckle of cold ham; some eggs upon anchovy toast; delicate rolls of bread; butter, raspberry jam, and clotted cream: all delicious to Mabel's town-bred taste, used to big joints of beef and mutton, and enormous puddings: substantial enough for hungry boys and girls.

'Yes, please, but pray don't give me all

at once,' said wicked Frank, as his sister helped him to a shaving, thin enough for a Vauxhall slice, at which he looked comically, doubled it over twice, and took at one mouthful.

The Duchess pressed his foot beneath the table, and looked entreatingly at him, but the spirit of mischief had taken hold of him; he was like a boy set free from school, and it was useless to try to control him.

'We came down yesterday,' said Mabel, trying to turn her aunts' attention from his antics. 'It is a very beautiful line of railroad, particularly below Exeter.'

'Do you really mean, my dear, that you have *all* come to that house? All ten of you?'

'Yes, all ten of us,' said the girl, smiling. 'Some of us are small people, you know, and pack in easily. None of us are very exacting about our quarters, so long

as we have that magnificent beach and the sea. Oh, aunt, to see the waves dashing up against the cliffs in such showers of foam, and rolling up so grandly along the sands! And the sea-gulls hovering over it! What pleasure it is!'

'But how can you all be properly accommodated at night?' asked Miss Selby.

'There was a difficulty at first,' explained candid Frank. 'I visited three doss-houses, at the East End, so as to acquire the faculty of housing numbers with due economy of space. The principle of slinging sacks in rows, above beds spread upon the floor, pleased me much. But Mabel objected, after the big boys had considerably damaged themselves by falling out of bed when they had nightmares after any particularly indigestible batch of the Duchess's pasties. *Now*, they lie down in relays upon the floor itself. He that is down, you know, can fear no fall. My

children, thanks to parental example, are all creatures of imagination. Lying down is to them very much the same as lying upon a down bed.'

The Misses Selby were not used to rhodomontade. They looked at each other, all uncertain how much to take literally, but each accepting their brother's account in a different degree, according to their individual character. Miss Selby looked shocked, Miss Letitia puzzled, Miss Rose a little contemptuous ; Miss Jane laughed.

'Come, papa,' said his daughter, a little nervously, 'if you have finished your luncheon, don't talk any more nonsense ; but, if my aunts have no objection, let us proceed to business. Even summer days come to an end, and we have a great deal to do. Mamma distrusts my driving, and will grow anxious if we are late.'

'My practical child, you are right, as usual. Bless you !' said he.

They started upon their shopping and other business, accompanied by two of the Miss Selbys. Miss Letitia could not walk about, she was nearly crippled from rheumatic gout, and Miss Rose stayed to prepare a generous basket full of garden produce, eggs, and home-made preserves, wherewith to assist her sister-in-law's larder. She undertook to send the donkey-cart to meet them when this was ready. The gardener boy should drive it to the top of the first hill beyond the town, and wait for them there, picking up parcels from various shops on the way.

'And take those ridiculous nosegays out of your hat, my dear,' said she. 'You shall have a proper rosebud to put at your throat, like anyone else, if you choose.'

'Like anyone else!' sighed Frank, sacrificing his wild-flowers mournfully.

'"Oh! the flags of Piccadilly!
Here's a song to make one silly!
Even here! So far from town!"

Good day, sir—' breaking off suddenly, and resuming the conventional manner of a gentleman, as a courteous, elderly, white-haired man approached, stopping to speak to Miss Selby, and lifting his hat to the strangers.

'My brother, Sir Theophilus Grenfell,' said Miss Selby.

'It is many years since we met, Mr. Selby,' said Sir Theophilus, 'but I thought that I could not be mistaken. One of your daughters? I am glad to see you again. Have you come to visit your sisters?'

'No, I have come to Polzeath, partly for sketching, partly for sea-air for my family, and also that we may have the pleasure of being near my sisters, and seeing the old places once more. There is no place like Cornwall, Sir Theophilus.'

'No, no—oh! certainly not, no, no,' said

the old gentleman. 'When did you leave town?'

The two men walked on together, chatting, a little apart from the ladies, and Frank's absurdities vanished altogether.

Mabel, with her aunt's assistance, completed her errands with no reference to her father; interviewed a servant; made her purchases, and pleased her elders greatly by her practical good sense.

'You will come down soon to see mamma and the children, won't you, auntie,' said she, when they took their leave. 'Mamma will be so grateful to you for all these good things, and she would be so pleased to show you Stephen and Amanda. All England know the little dears, papa has painted them so often, in so many characters. They are so pretty, quite our show specimens. Amanda is very like Auntie Rose, I see. Papa always says so.'

'We will come very soon, my dear. We are very glad to have seen you. Our love to your mother. Good-bye, Frank.'

'Papa has a sketch of the children for you, which you will receive as soon as we can make some place in which to unpack the pictures,' said Mabel, waving her hand in farewell.

The Miss Selbys went home to discuss this exciting break in their quiet lives.

'How good-looking poor Frank still is,' said Miss Rose.

'And what a sweet pretty girl,' said Miss Letitia.

'Do you think her pretty?' asked Miss Selby, dubiously. 'Her forehead is so low, and her features not at all regular.'

'But her eyes are so good, and her face is so expressive; her smile is so sweet.'

'And her complexion is good,' added Miss Jane.

'Poor girl! She seems to do her best, but I am afraid that things are in a sad state among them. Did you notice how Frank said that her cooking gave her brothers nightmare? It must be very heavy. And the idea of her being expected to carry currant nobbies about in her pocket, instead of their sitting down to proper meals at proper times.'

Miss Selby shook her head mournfully at the thought; but Miss Jane broke into a peal of laughter, and even Miss Letitia smiled.

'Oh! Elizabeth, Elizabeth, you will kill me some day. How can you take everything so literally? Frank was only talking downright stuff, in his old way.'

'There is a good deal in what Elizabeth says, though,' said Miss Rose. 'I do wish that they were all more like other people.'

CHAPTER III.

THE MORNING POST REACHES THE HALL.

Miss Rose Selby was, as has been said, the intimate friend of Lady Sarah Grenfell, and accustomed to be sent for in all or any emergency which might befall that good lady.

The post brought letters to the Hall on the same morning as that when Frank Selby's epistle reached his sisters, and one of them announced that a difficulty had arisen in the family of Lady Courtney, only sister of Sir Theophilus Grenfell.

The Grenfells were very wealthy. Gen-

eration after generation had added to their possessions and local consequence in every way; the place was a magnificent one, its grounds, its timber, its picture-gallery were all remarkable; but death and sorrow had been very busy among its owners, and had left Sir Theophilus and his sister the only survivors out of many brothers and sisters. They were of affectionate disposition, and warmly attached to each other.

Lady Courtney's children were extremely delicate, and she wrote to say that her daughter Augusta had broken down in health over her first London season.

'Sir Theophilus,' said Lady Grenfell.

Sir Theophilus was deep in the morning paper. His meal was concluded, and his plate pushed back.

'Sir Theophilus,' said her ladyship, in a rather louder voice.

'My dear,' exclaimed he, with a little

start, laying aside his paper. 'Do you want me?'

'This is a letter from your sister,' said she. 'Diana is in some trouble again about the girls. Augusta has been ill, and, though better now, is ordered to leave town, and seek some purer air for the hot months.'

'Dear, dear, poor Di! What anxiety she is always having with those young people! Is it Augusta's lungs that are affected?'

'Letters are, at all times, very unsatisfactory,' said his wife, turning that of her sister-in-law over and over, as if hoping to find more in it than there was. 'Still, I hope there is nothing very seriously amiss.'

'Augusta was never fit for a London season,' remarked the young man who completed the breakfast-party.

'No, she has always been a delicate girl.'

'Diana should take her off to the South of France, or Madeira, at once,' said Sir Theophilus.

'So she would, but there is a difficulty as to who could go with her. That nice governess of theirs married, you know, and Diana cannot be spared herself, for Louisa's prospects appear to be in a critical position just at present.'

'Louisa! Some love-affair? How jolly!' cried Charles.

'Is it something desirable?' asked the elder gentleman.

'Very. Lord Dereham has been paying her a great deal of attention this season; he is always in their house. He has not yet proposed, but Diana has no doubt but what he is only waiting for some opportunity, and cannot, therefore, leave town herself just now.'

'No, no: no, no, certainly not,' said Sir Theophilus. 'Dereham would be a capi-

tal match for the girl. As good a fellow as I know, and his property so near theirs in Devonshire. I am very glad to hear of this.'

'Why should not Augusta come here, mother?' asked Charles.

Charles Grenfell, only child of that old couple, born after many years of marriage and many disappointed hopes, heir to that magnificent place, and only hope of that old baronetage which had a fatal reputation of never descending straight from father to eldest son, Mr. Charles Grenfell was a personage of immense consequence to all around him. He was a stalwart young fellow enough, and showed every likelihood of living to come into the inheritance. He had left Eton, and was taking a summer's holiday before commencing his studies at Oxford. He had elected to spend this interval at home.

'I am tired of going abroad,' said he.

'It seems as if I knew every place better than my own neighbourhood. There will be some shooting by-and-by; let us stay quietly here for the summer.'

His will was law to his father and mother in such matters, and they were growing old enough to enjoy quietness also. They gave up the London season, and were vegetating happily in their own home. But some weeks of solitude had, perhaps, been enough for the young man. He had wandered about, fishing, lying under trees in lovely scenery, reading poetry, and dreaming, not working hard, though he had a tutor, and he now caught at the chance of securing his favourite cousin for a companion. Almost all the young people of his own set were either up in London, at school, or reading somewhere through the long vacation. His eldest cousin was yachting round the world, trying to avoid the family scourge

of consumption, rife among the Courtneys. The girls, who came nearest to him in age, were in town for the season; the younger boys were at Rugby and Harrow. It was a capital chance for him to secure a companion of his own age at Tregarthen for the next two months.

'This climate is as good as anything Aunt Di would get at Hyères or Nice. You would cosset Gussie up, mother. I daresay that she has only been dancing herself to death, and that she will be as right as a trivet after a few weeks of Cornish air and Cornish cream.'

Lady Sarah looked at Sir Theophilus.

'Diana would rather like that, I fancy,' said she.

Sir Theophilus was not quick in catching a hint conveyed by a look, but he was fond of his sister, and always hospitable.

'Yes, yes, yes,' said he. 'Tregarthen is "home" to poor dear Di; no place like

it to her, of course. Have her girl here by all means, if Di would like it,—a nice girl, a very nice girl. We will take care of her. Let me see Di's letter, my love.'

He read it through his *pince-nez*, holding the paper up with the other hand at a short distance from his eyes.

'Dereham, eh? Diana is in luck; an excellent match for Louisa; it would be a pity if anything should come into the way of it. Bnt, dear, dear, how these children grow up! It seems only the other day that they were all little things on Dartmoor ponies, with long hair streaming down their backs; and now to think there should be any talk of Louisa marrying! Dear, dear!'

'Father! Louisa is twenty. It is high time for her to settle,' cried Charles. 'Augusta came out this year, and the twins are nearly seventeen.'

'Is it really so! Well, well,' said the

old gentleman. 'Poor Diana, what a tribe it is for that little woman, and all so delicate, too! I am glad that you are a boy, Charlie. We shall not have this trouble of settling you desirably just yet. Boys don't fall in love so soon as girls, and it is very well for us old folks that you don't.'

There was the suspicion of a smile about Lady Sarah's lips as she reached out her jewelled hand for the letter.

'Charlie is not far from twenty, also,' said she. 'Next year he comes of age. He will bring us home a wife before long, I hope, Sir Theophilus. I would like to see his heir before we die.'

'His heir? Oh! yes, yes, very true; but there is no chance of that just yet. Take your time, my boy, and look well round you first. At any rate, don't let your wife be a cousin, nor so delicate as poor Diana's girls are. Look out for

healthy stock to bolster up the old name with, my boy.'

'No fear, father,' laughed the heir. 'Augusta would not have me were I to ask her, and I am not likely to do so. One might nearly as well marry one's sister as one's cousin.'

'And what shall I write to Diana?' asked Lady Sarah.

'Oh, you know what to say better than I could tell you. Beg her to let us have the poor dear girl as soon as she likes. You had better have Miss Selby here, had you not? to help in amusing her,—getting up excursions, and that sort of thing. You don't like driving about the country, you know. Rose Selby will take her off your hands.'

'Well, yes; it would be a good plan to have Rose here if Augusta comes. But I fear that, if she does come, she will hardly be fit to drive about much.'

'She will quickly pick up health when she comes here, I daresay. Children are so quickly up and down. Besides, we have heard of poor dear Di's scares before now.'

'Poor Diana! Yes, and with reason, too. How many children is it that she has lost?'

'Four or five. But they were all the younger ones, except that second son. It was London that killed them. The elder ones, who were brought up in the country, did well enough until Courtney went into Parliament, and began living half his life in that pestilent air.'

'That is always your theory, father; but who is to live in London if everybody must spend all their days in the country?'

'There would always be people who could live nowhere else, of course. But if Courtney gave up worrying about politics, and attended to his children, it would

be a much better thing for them all. When the Lord has made a man a country gentleman, why, in the name of goodness, cannot he be contented to *be* a country gentleman, instead of wasting time, health, and money up in that howling wilderness of a town?'

Lady Sarah made no reply beyond—

'Exactly so, my dear.'

This was as complete a fad of her husband's as any political one of Sir Thomas Courtney's could be, and it was an old sore with her.

She was of an ambitious character, and would have liked to have employed the great wealth of the Grenfells in making a high position for her son.

As a great leader of society, she would have been able to make and maintain an elevated place into which Charlie should have stepped; and from which he might have soared far higher. She had planned

some such *rôle* as this when she married Sir Theophilus. She had married from ambition; she had believed him to be a quiet, gentle little man, whom she could have guided and ruled for his own good: his great wealth made all her dreams possible, but she had found him most obstinately wedded to his own opinions, and utterly unmanageable.

Then, year after year had passed, full of blighted hopes of a family, with little likelihood of ever having a son at all; and disappointment rather soured her temper.

She was envious of her sister-in-law. Diana had a fresh child every year; sons to do her credit by their talents, daughters to marry among exalted people, and consolidate the family connection, and that poor-spirited creature, exactly like her brother, thought of nothing but their health. Lady Sarah was convinced that their health would be right enough if

Diana was not always thinking of it, and coddling them up. It made them delicate to be so careful of them.

But Lady Sarah's secret discontent was newly aroused, and pricked her more sorely than ever now, when her own son had left Eton with no particular reputation, showed no eagerness for going to college, and actually played into his father's hands by begging to remain at home, in their own place, all this summer.

Charlie was not stupid, either. He had plenty of ability, but did not care to exert it. It was too bad. She looked around her for a holiday tutor for the young man, and found one exactly to her own mind.

Mr. Jackson was the son of a clergyman who had died, leaving a widow and family of children in small circumstances. A great effort was being made to enable the eldest of them to pass the examination for the Civil Service, and he gladly undertook

to read with young Grenfell for a certain number of hours a day, rising early and sitting up late to study his own subjects at the same time, thankful to be able to do this in such comfortable quarters, and in such good air, while saving his salary to pay examination fees for himself, and schooling for his little brother.

Such an example, constantly before him, might have stirred Charlie up to work, surely. But it did not. Lady Sarah was sore at heart.

And, now, here was this girl likely to be fastened on her for months, and she was well aware that Lady Courtney's wishes would lead in the direction of an attachment arising between her and her cousin. She knew this by instinct, nor did anything belie her conviction.

Should this attachment arise, how would it influence her son? She did not desire it for him; she feared that it would make

him still more inclined to sit down idle, and lead a lotus-eating existence without other dignity than his wealth must necessarily impart to him.

But she hardly knew Augusta. It might work differently. No objection could be raised to the match if the liking did arise, except her own hopes that Charlie would wed higher. But, if it stirred him up to work?

Lady Sarah sighed, as she wrote to her sister-in-law, and gave the invitation.

The reply was almost like a favourable answer to her doubts. After warm-hearted thanks for the brotherly and sisterly kindness which prompted the invitation, Lady Courtney went on to say:

'I am so glad to think of dear Augusta being with you, for there is no knowing under whose influence she might have fallen were she sent among strangers. The

dear girl is so earnest, so enthusiastic about all which she undertakes;—she throws herself so heart and soul into books, and music, and art, that she gives herself none of the repose which her health absolutely requires. She is quite the intellectual one of the family; and I beg of you, my dear Sarah, to curb her energies by all the means in your power rather than encourage her to read, and wear herself out by thinking and writing. Let her be out of doors as much as possible, and allow her active mind to lie fallow for the time.'

'Dear, dear; dear, dear, how extraordinary,' said Sir Theophilus. 'Where did the girl get all this cleverness. Courtney is no genius, for all his attention to politics. His voice was never heard in the House; he just votes with his leader; he never set the Thames on fire, nor ever will. Di was never a genius. Young Tom was plucked

for his little go. Where does the girl get all this wonderful cleverness?'

Charles broke out into a peal of the most uncontrollable laughter upon hearing his father talk thus.

'Father!' cried he, when he could speak for laughing, 'don't you know that all Aunt Diana's geese are swans?'

'Maybe, maybe,' said the old gentleman, with a little twist in the corner of his mouth, 'but, really, this account is too—too—too——'

Charles laughed the more.

CHAPTER IV.

A MORNING WALK.

'I AM going up to the Hall, sisters,' said Miss Rose, coming into the cottage parlour with her hat on.

'Do see if you can borrow a phaeton, then, that we may drive to Polzeath one day, and call upon Mrs. Frank,' said Miss Selby. 'It is a week ago since Frank and Mabel were here, and we have not been over yet.'

'I don't know what day I could go at present,' demurred Miss Rose. 'There are the Girls' Friendly treat coming on, and the

school examinations; and we ought to call at the Holfords before we go anywhere else, we have not been there for so long; and I want the Holford girls to help in the Girls' Friendly Society treat. Perhaps Jane would go.'

'I?' said Miss Jane. 'I could not fix a day till that Poland hen has hatched out. I should lose all those choice chickens, in every likelihood, if I trusted them to Roger. I have three black Spanish hens, too, that will hatch out at the end of this week; and I must take my geranium cuttings as soon as possible, while the plants are in such good condition to yield them. I could not go till that is done.'

'It would not do for you to go alone, would it?' asked Miss Rose, doubtfully. 'You might ask some of the girls over to spend a day.'

'Oh, Rose! I think more of you ought to go,' remonstrated Miss Letitia.

'Well, I suppose we ought, but there is so much to do always. I will see if we can contrive it,' said Miss Rose, in a resigned voice.

'It will look so,' pursued her sister. 'Frank is our only brother, and the children our own nephews and nieces.'

'Yes, yes, of course we must go. I will see about it,' said Miss Rose.

The excitement caused by the visit of Frank and Mabel had passed away, and the old ladies' accustomed little duties and pleasures once more became paramount in their eyes. They were not cold-hearted, but used to being engrossed with their own affairs. Only Miss Letitia, being set aside from active participation in these, thought more often of Frank's hearty laugh, and Mabel's gentle eyes. She was often a little lonely while her sisters were busy over household and parish matters;

but it was not her habit to exact attention, and her sisters did not find this out.

Miss Rose took the path through the plantations, into which a gate from the cottage garden opened.

It was a pleasant, shady path, fragrant with the resinous odour of pine-trees, whose needles carpeted the ground. Great masses of bracken grew wherever glades opened among the thickets, and delicate lady-ferns lifted their paler green fronds in graceful clumps among them.

Grey rock cropped up here and there, cushioned with moss; and causing the bright little stream which ran through the place to meander its course in very tortuous fashion; now spreading out into a marshy corner, blue with forget-me-nots; now deepening into a pool, dark with brown shadows; and then breaking among large boulders, and slipping over them in silvery little falls.

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Such wild flowers as love the woods grew plentifully here, and all the open spots would be gorgeous with heather soon. Only an early spray or two was yet in bloom, but swarms of dainty little blue and copper-coloured butterflies hovered in the sun over them.

The gate from the Misses Selby's garden, leading into this pleasant path, had been opened by Sir Theophilus on purpose that Miss Letitia might walk here when she was sufficiently well. It was a great boon to her, and a bench or two had been put up, upon which she might rest.

The last of these was situated where the woods took a sudden turn along the crest of a hill, and the ground sank abruptly into a wide basin, thickly planted with rhododendrons, now a blaze of colour.

The effect of this, bursting unexpectedly upon the eye after the shade of the plantations, was extremely beautiful. It was

the beginning of the celebrated American gardens of Tregarthen.

Some rustic stone steps led down the descent, in close proximity to the cascade which leaped from rock to rock, and then united its waters to those of the little river which ran along its bottom.

At the foot of the steps, Miss Rose encountered Charles Grenfell, lounging at his ease, with a volume of poetry in his hand.

He sprang up as he saw her descend, and assisted her to more level ground.

'I am glad to meet you, Miss Rose,' said he. 'My mother wants to see you, I know. Augusta Courtney is coming for a long visit, and my mother would be so glad if you could come too, and help us to entertain her. It would be awfully good of you if you would. Augusta has been ill, and it is not every kind of amusement which would suit her, and so many people

are away now that we are afraid she may be dull.'

'I hope that your cousin has not been very unwell. Not anything affecting the lungs, I hope?'

'No, I think not. She had a cold, but it has not been chest trouble, I believe. Nothing more than inability to stand the racket of the season, I fancy.'

'I should be very happy to come, of course, if your mother wishes me to do so. When does your cousin arrive?'

'Not for a day or two yet. We hoped that she would have been able to travel sooner, but the doctor thought the journey too long without a break. She went to Hastings first, then on to Devonshire, and will be here early next week. You must keep the school-treat for her, Miss Rose.'

'I was going up to consult your mother

about it. Will it not be too much for your cousin, as she is not well?'

'She must be very ill if she could not bear a school-treat; nothing would save her if that would be too much, I should think. Oh! Augusta will want some excitement, you may be sure.'

'I wanted to beg the loan of a pony-carriage for one day this week. My brother has brought his family to Polzeath for the summer, and some of us would like to drive over and see them all.'

'I will drive you myself, with pleasure. It must have been your brother whom I saw yesterday, then. Does he paint?'

'Yes, Frank is an artist.'

'And he had a good-looking fellow with him, sketching too. A man about my age, fair-haired, with a high nose, and a very jolly-looking fellow altogether.'

'I have no doubt that would be his

eldest son, Horace, but I have not seen him since he was a child.'

'A lot of children were careering about them, and they had luncheon baskets. I wondered who they were. I wish I had known they were relations of yours, for I longed to make one of such a merry set. They were all laughing so heartily, and I had to ride away again all by myself, when I had washed the Black Prince's legs in the breakers, feeling very dull. Miss Rose, I do so wish that I had brothers and sisters! There is nothing in the world to do here.'

'Oh! for shame, Mr. Charles. How many people would envy you your position. Nothing to do in this beautiful place!'

'No, nothing at all to do. The place would be as beautiful without me. Somebody else would pay the fellows for keeping it in order. Oh! how I wish that it

was not always in such beautiful order! I came here this morning to try and deceive myself into the belief that this corner was wild, but it is not. Even the waterfall may not tumble over the rocks without due regard to splashing æsthetically. I am sick of it all.'

Miss Rose looked puzzled.

'Why did you object to going abroad, then? Sir Theophilus and your mother were willing to go anywhere that you liked. Norway might have been wild enough for you.'

'I have been to Norway,' said he, wearily. 'We were kind enough to go there and look at nature one summer; but there was nothing else to do, so we came home again. The sun could shine at midnight without us, you know, just as well.'

'There is Mr. Jackson looking for you. Perhaps he can teach you something to interest you.'

'He is such an awful prig,' said Charles, lowering his voice confidentially. 'Oh, that he were not such a virtuous young man! If I could only detect him tripping in any way, it would be a relief to my mind. It would prove him to be human. I do not feel myself fit company for angelic visitors yet. They embarrass me with their perfection.'

'My dear Mr. Charles, you say such odd things. You are not a wild young man. You would not really wish Mr. Jackson to be wicked.'

'No, there is no such luck,' said Charles, yawning. 'But he makes me long to scream sometimes, or to throw books at him, or break out somehow.'

Mr. Jackson, in very correct costume, with hair nicely brushed, drew near, and lifted his hat politely to the lady.

'I have been looking for you, Mr. Grenfell,' said he. 'Eleven, I believe, is the

hour for our studies, and it is now a quarter to twelve.'

'Why do you keep your watch always right, Jackson?' asked his pupil. 'Learn wisdom from me. It is so inconvenient to have the correct time always at hand. I believe that my watch says twenty minutes past ten, so I am still early for our reading.'

'Will you allow me to regulate your watch by station time? It is a pity to be so far wrong as that.'

'Regulate my precious time-keeper! Not for worlds! Let me keep one irregularity about me, at least.'

'I merely wished to save you from some probable inconvenience.'

'All the clocks at Tregarthen are right, I believe. There are fifty, more or less, about the place. Let me have something wrong about me.'

'My dear Mr. Grenfell, it would be de-

cidedly wrong to waste more time. Don't talk so much nonsense, but let us set to work as fast as possible now.'

Mr. Jackson—nobody ever called him anything else; it was doubtful whether he had been 'Bobby' even in the days of his infancy—Mr. Jackson walked off with his prisoner, who was quite as much of a trial to him as he was to Charles.

From some reason, not worth mention, it was more convenient to the Tregarthen stable arrangements that the Miss Selbys should be driven to Polzeath that afternoon than any other. Charles could not escape from his tutor in time to act as their charioteer, and they went in state, with a smart coachman, in a barouche.

Their brother, and most of the young people, were not at home. They saw Mrs. Frank, who was darning a huge pile of black merino stockings, with Dorothea's assistance. She had tea brought in for

them, and, presently, the little ones ran in.

They certainly were pretty children, but did not appear to the best advantage in sand-grubbing garments and faces that wanted washing. Nurse caught them, and put on clean pinafores, but it was time for their aunts to go before they re-appeared, as the horses could not be kept waiting.

It was a formal visit. Mrs. Frank was nervous. It was not a good day with her, she had a headache. The parlour would have been neater under the care of almost any of the other girls. Dorothea was not housewifely. All the milk had gone sour, and fresh supplies had not arrived. Altogether, the visit was not a great success.

CHAPTER V.

DOROTHEA'S INDIGNATION.

Soon after the visitors had left Polzeath, Frank Selby and the young people returned home.

'I am sorry to have missed them,' said Frank. 'Why have they not come over before?'

'It was not convenient to their ladyships,' replied Dorothea, scornfully.

'My dear!' remonstrated her mother.

She was never known to reprove in harsher terms, but that was generally enough for the girls who loved her so heartily.

Not in this case, however. Dorothea, outspoken and strong in character, was boiling over with wrath at the neglect shown to her mother, and which this tardy and formal visit had by no means appeased. Neither had it lifted the safety-valve to let the steam escape.

'Well, mother dear, I must have my say for once,' said she, indignantly.

'For once?' murmured Horace, gently. 'Dorothea asserts her opinion for once only. Even the long-suffering worm is now about to turn, for once. Let us listen to the tirade which is to favour us this once, and once only. Silence for the meek Dorothea Selby's once.'

'You be quiet, Horry!' cried his sister, turning hotly upon him, while smiles appeared on more than one face. 'Here is mother, who has been so ill, and is still so weak, obliged to come to this out-of-the-way place with all of us, who, for all those

people know, are far too young to nurse her properly, and who have all been ill too for months and months. What proper attention or comforts can she have here? Why don't these old women look after her a little? *They* can have nothing better to do. *They* ought to think it a privilege to have mother for a sister, and do all they can for her. But how do they behave to her? They let her be here for ten days without any notice at all, and then drive up in a grand barouche, with a coachman and footman, and a pair of fine bays, too good to stand or wait, or be put up in this stable, and they march in with, "Well, my dear, we are glad to see you looking so well. We heard that you had been poorly." Poorly! I wish *they* had been so poorly, they would know something about illness then.'

'My dear, my dear!'

'Mother, it is of no use to "my dear"

me now—it is not indeed. There is Aunt Rose going to stay with those useless people at Tregarthen because a ridiculous girl has over-danced herself in town, and got a cold in her head. *She* must be attended to, and *you* neglected.'

'Go it, Dolly,' said her brother. 'Give it out; you will burst else.'

'Don't teaze her, Horace,' said the Duchess May. 'Dolly is right enough, mamma *is* neglected shamefully. It does not matter for us, but our aunts ought to be more attentive to her.'

'Well do I know it,' said Horace, shrugging his shoulders.

'What is the use of being vexed, my dears?' said their mother. 'Your aunts and I never did suit each other. Our ways are so different from theirs.'

'Let them change theirs, then,' pronounced Dorothea, decidedly. 'Of course ours are different; *we* live in the world and know best what to do.'

Mrs. Selby laughed.

'They live out of the world, and think that they know best.'

'Oh! come now, mother, little mother,' cried Horace. 'Come now! When Aunt Elizabeth has had ten children, she may talk. Not till then.'

'My dear boy, your aunt with ten children! Only fancy her dismay!'

And her laugh was so merry that it infected them every one.

'What is all this noise?' said Frank himself, putting his head in at the door, holding a palette and sheaf of brushes in his hand. 'The old lady leading the riot is something new. What is the joke?'

'Here is Horace picturing your eldest sister with ten children round her, naughty boy.'

'What children they would be!' cried Frank, quite appreciating the joke. 'They would be born at a dignified age, able

to comport themselves correctly. Their cradle would be a backboard, their earliest walk a minuet. They would all have Roman noses.'

'I should like to see Aunt Elizabeth dance a breakdown,' said Horace.

'Well, well,' said Frank, 'a joke is a joke, but it should not go too far. Your aunts mean well, after all. It is not their fault that they have grown so prim. What a life they lead, poor souls!'

'Why do they lead it, then?' sniffed Dorothea.

'Everybody knows their own way best, my dear,' pleaded the gentle mother.

'I was always different to them, my dear,' said the father, 'an odd one in the family, and a thorn in their sides. I hark back to some former unknown member of it, and have more lively blood in me than they. I always did shock their proprieties, and it is better to live apart,

and agree to differ. I am very fond of them, after all; they are dear old souls, and love us all in their own way.'

'A nasty, cold-hearted way,' muttered Dorothea; but it was not necessary to hear her, so her grumblings were allowed to pass.

Miss Rose Selby went to Tregarthen to help Lady Sarah in her arduous task of entertaining one young lady; and Mrs. Selby went on packing her ten children into five bed-rooms and a cupboard. They slept two in one bed, three and four in one room. They slept on mattresses spread on the floor; took their meals out of doors in fine weather; and by detachments in bad ditto; but they picked up health, and were always cheerful and happy.

Mrs. Selby was not strong enough to do much more than sit in the one easy-chair, with little Désirée on her lap; but they put the chair out of doors, in the sun,

every fine day. They rigged up an awning over her head with broom-handles and cheap linen, roughly carpentered by the boys, and she reclined there, in unaccustomed idleness, watching the long Atlantic breakers come rolling in, dashing upon the quiet beach, foaming and sparkling in beauty, regaining her strength steadily, if slowly.

The Duchess May worked like a galley-slave among them all; the others sketched, shrimped, lounged, each helping a little in his or her own way. There was a great deal of laughing and talking among them, many innocent jokes, and much happiness in a very unconventional manner.

Frank Selby himself was seized with an inspiration, and began to paint his picture of 'Waifs and Strays,' afterwards to become so celebrated. It represented little Stephen and Amanda, half naked, hand in hand, wandering along that desolate sea-

coast; stormy waves beside them, and a stormy sky behind them, partially veiling the rocky headland in mist. The contrasts between the tender childhood and rugged landscape, helpless babies and stern Nature, warm flesh-tints and cold rocks over which snow-white foam was dashing, were extremely beautiful.

Frank, seized with enthusiasm over his work, painted early and late upon it, and it grew rapidly beneath his skilful hand.

Horace ought to have been working hard for the approaching Civil Service examination; he was destined for that, as well as young Grenfell's tutor; but he was one of those who had been ill, and he found going out with his father, sketching, much more to his taste than reading mathematics. He had a very pretty talent for art; most of the children

showed aptitude for it in one form or another, and they lived in an atmosphere which cultivated it.

Dorothea was, perhaps, the most ambitious and hard-working in that line. She painted flowers with considerable skill, and longed to succeed in the profession, so as to avoid the life of a governess, which was her only alternative, and for which her hot temper and unguarded tongue did not qualify her well. In this country place she found a wealth of wild flowers to draw from, and under her father's tuition was making rapid progress.

Sir Theophilus and his son rode down together one day to call, but found no one at home except Mrs. Selby, who was lying down. It was one of her bad days, her head was aching severely, and she could not see them. Mabel had sent everyone

else out of the way, to keep the house quiet; and though she was attending to her mother, who was then asleep, she did not think it necessary to appear.

'Ah! Sir Theophilus has called, I see,' said Mr. Selby, on returning, and finding that gentleman's card. 'I am sorry to have missed him. Horace, the young man has called too. You had better return the visit with me.'

'Is it necessary, sir? These people are not in our way at all, it must be a mere formal civility on their part.'

'Well, I used to know Sir Theophilus very well at one time, and his sister, Lady Courtney too. There is never any wisdom in throwing away acquaintances who seem willing to be friendly. The intimacy was more with my sisters than with myself, they were of the same ages as the elder brothers and sisters who died.'

'Were there not several? and is there

not some sad story about their deaths?' asked Mrs. Selby.

'Yes, there was a large family of them once, and very little probability of Sir Theophilus succeeding to the inheritance. The old Lady Grenfell, his mother, was a very fine woman, too fine to look after young children, and it did not work well to leave them to hirelings. Two daughters, sweet pretty girls, died in the same week, just as they were nearly grown up. They were always great friends of your two eldest aunts. A fever broke out, earlier than that, and two of the boys and another sister had died of it; and the second son was thrown from his horse, on the carriage drive which then ran close to the front of the Hall, but was altered after that, for her ladyship could not bear to look out on the place. James was killed actually before her eyes. She never looked up again, though she lived for some years, but it

practically killed her. He was her favourite son.'

'How very sad, poor creature!' sighed Mrs. Selby.

'Yes, it was a fearful chapter of accidents. The two youngest children were nursed by the wife of a miller, near the sea, a Mrs. Rosewarne, a good motherly creature, who did her duty by them very thoroughly. They were a little older than I, but used to be my playmates, all through our growing up.'

'Was not there something about a love-affair with a miller's daughter? Was it that man's child?' asked Mrs. Selby. 'It seems to me that I heard some such tale once.'

'Gossiping old lady! Yes, there was. The girl was very pretty, and Charles, the eldest son, was very fond of her. Of course it could not be allowed, and he was packed off abroad. Nothing would serve

him but having her brother to go with him, as half valet, half companion, and his father allowed it as some sort of compensation to the family for breaking off the love-affair. I never knew all the particulars; but, about a year afterwards, the poor fellow died abroad, and Rosewarne brought him home in his coffin.'

'What became of the poor girl?'

'Well, she was not a very nice sort of girl, there was some awkward story about her, I never knew exactly what. She disappeared somehow. The old baronet was liberal to young Rosewarne, and he set up a house of call for gentlemen's servants, in the mews behind St. James's Square, and there he dwelleth still, to witness if I lie,' concluded Frank.

'Oh! those are nurse's friends, are they not? They live in a place with quite a poetical name. Apple Tree Court, or some such thing,' cried Mabel.

'Yes, those are the people. I don't think much of the man; there is something about him which I never liked, but his wife is a good sort of woman, I believe. She is a Withiel woman, and was in service at the Hall in her youth.'

'I like that poor daughter of hers,' said Mabel.

'I know you do. I don't think I ever saw her, but I believe you have been very kind to her.'

'But, father,' said Horace, 'how came it that you never saw anything of Sir Theophilus in town, when you used to know him so well as a child?'

'Oh! why, when he became a man of importance, our lives took different courses. We drifted apart. It never answers for the copper pot and the earthen porringer to float down the stream in company. It is apt to be bad for the porringer. I have had plenty to think of else, and he is very

little in town, only comes up for a couple of months in the season. Lady Sarah can never drag him to London for longer than that; and I am generally rather busy just then, you know.'

'Great people have their troubles as well as small ones,' said Mrs. Selby. 'How thankful we ought to be that we have all our children about us!'

'Yes,' said Frank. 'They are like the plagues of Egypt, but we don't want to be rid of them at the cost of sending them to wander about the desert just yet, do we, Steenie boy?'

He tossed the child up in the air, and began a game of romps with him, which put a stop to all further conversation.

CHAPTER VI.

MISS AUGUSTA COURTNEY.

Miss Augusta Courtney arrived at Tregarthen one fine day, with all her Lares and Penates.

Her cousin Charles had driven to the nearest station to meet her, and safely escorted her to the Hall, with her maid, fifteen trunks, and her white poodle dog: a most absurd creature, artistically shaved, wearing a gold bangle upon one tufted leg, and having the lock of hair upon his brow tied up with crimson ribbon.

They drove in an open barouche, the

weather being lovely, but the young lady was smothered up in soft fur and white woollen wraps, until very little of her could be seen.

A cart followed, containing portmanteaus, dress-baskets, trunks, bonnet-boxes, and what not,—enough to stock a baggage waggon.

'Well, my dear,' said Lady Sarah, as her son brought in the tall willowy figure, 'I am glad to see you. I hope that you are not much fatigued with your journey.'

'Oh! how kind of you! Yes, I am tired to death,' said the sweet languid voice. 'It is such a journey! And the dust has been something fearful. And my head is so weary with having my hair done up for so many hours.'

'You could have taken your hat off, my dear.'

'Yes, so I did, but I want my hair down, and brushed, to soothe my nerves. Why

don't girls wear their hair unbound now, as they used to do in olden times. Robes loosely flowing, hair as free, you know. Oh! the trammels of this nineteenth century!'

Lady Sarah laughed.

'Go up to your room, you silly girl, and get rid of your trammels as soon as you like. Hawken will see that your maid is comfortable, and bring you some tea. We dine at eight.'

'She seems to be very much done up,' said Miss Rose, as the new-comer departed.

'Oh! she is not as much so as she seems to be,' said Lady Sarah. 'Her mother spoils them so. She has brought them up to dread a crumpled rose-leaf.'

'That is not her theory, mother,' laughed Charles. 'She has been dilating all the way from the station upon the dignity of labour, and the privileges attached to the

working classes, who deal with the realities of life. She made me feel quite small because I happen to be born a gentleman.'

'So you ought to feel, you lazy boy. Not even a trout caught to-day! What did you do with yourself all the morning?'

'I was at hard mental work, mother. I was fitting myself to entertain a young lady of high intellectual culture, by perusing Browning's poems. It was necessary to lie at full length under the beech-trees, to support such an undertaking, and the great fatigue had to be recruited by sleep.'

'Go away, you are incorrigible! Go and perform the manual labour of putting yourself ready for dinner. Rose, when you go up to dress, would you be so very kind as to see if Augusta has everything which she wants?'

'Certainly, I will go at once.'

Miss Augusta was seated in comfort,

in a loose wrapper, beside an open window. Roses scented the room from the huge bowl of them beside her; her feet were extended in the long chair on which she rested; a book lay open on her knees; tea was beside her on a little table, and the maid was brushing the beautiful hair which rippled over her shoulders.

'Oh, how good of you to come, Miss Selby,' she sighed. 'I have all I need, thank you. This is repose. How sweet to listen to that distant lark, sinking to his rest.'

'Will you feel equal to coming down to dinner this evening?'

'Yes, thanks very much. It would be my duty to make the effort, and see Uncle Theophilus. Charlie tells me that he was obliged to attend the magistrates' meeting, so he could not fetch me himself from the station.'

'No, he was very sorry.'

'Oh, it is of no manner of consequence. I shall see him at dinner, I suppose. Miss Selby, what is your opinion of Browning's poems?'

'I never read any of them,' said Miss Rose, who, in fact, had never even heard of them, for reading was not much in her line.

'Never read any of them! Oh, how I envy you! You have all the pleasure of making acquaintance with them yet to come. What felicity!'

Miss Rose did not know what to say, so wisely held her tongue.

'That will do, Josephine,' said Miss Augusta, rising from her chair. 'What have you put out for me to wear this evening?'

'Just a white dress, miss. There is no one here but the family. I thought you might perhaps relieve it with a simple cluster of these roses.'

'No, they are too full blown. Get me some pale tea-rose buds, not more than half-open. Full-blown roses are so vulgar, are they not, Miss Selby? Common people always wear them.'

Miss Rose thought of her niece, and the wild roses in her hat, with renewed displeasure of poor Mabel. It had never occurred to her before that there could be any vulgarity in natural flowers, but she saw it plainly now, and blushed at the remembrance of her niece's bad taste. It had been her own intention to relieve her well-worn black grenadine dress by a pretty knot of pink roses, and had them lying, duly prepared, upon the toilet-table in her own room; but they would not do now that her eyes were opened to her mistake.

'If I can do nothing for you, Miss Courtney, I will leave you to dress,' said she.

'Thanks, very much, it was so kind of you to come. No, Josephine, put those ornaments away. You know that I never wear jewelry in the country, it does not harmonise with its freshness and simplicity. Do the sweet wild birds deck themselves with rings and chains? You should always follow nature as closely as possible. It is a fundamental rule in dress, remember.'

Miss Letitia had lent her best pink topaz brooch to her sister, and Miss Rose had meant to have clasped her lace with it that evening, but nothing would have induced her to wear it after that. Yet did the poor lady feel a little perplexed as to the manner in which she should set off her poor old dinner dress, as she retired to put it on.

She sighed as she locked the brooch away again, and looked at the roses which she had arranged so prettily. Buds did

not look nearly so well among her black lace, but she hoped that they were the correct thing, according to the highest verdict.

Miss Augusta was an extremely elegant figure, as she swept into the drawing-room in her freshness and simplicity; but the good lady could not but feel puzzled as to where nature ought to be followed and where abandoned. The sweet wild birds certainly did not deck themselves out with soft filmy laces, with artistically piled hair, with elaborately simple draperies, any more than with jewelry.

Good sense came to her rescue.

'I can never manage to alter any gown I possess so as to look like that,' thought she. 'Perhaps I had better not attempt London fashions at all. But I *could* tie some black velvet ribbon like that throatlet, at any rate.'

'We have some new pictures since you

were here last, Augusta,' said Charles, as they waited for dinner to be announced. 'Here is a landscape by Vicat Cole. A pretty bit, is it not? And look at these cherubs! Are they not lovely?'

'Surely that is a Selby?' remarked the young lady. 'It is just in his sweet style. He has such a lovely thing in the Academy this year; the "Invalid."'

'Ah! that reminds me, Rose,' said Sir Theophilus. 'I called on your brother yesterday, and was sorry not to find him at home.'

'Oh, Miss Selby! Is the artist really your brother? It never occurred to me. How very interesting! I have wished so much to know something about him. He is never to be met with in town. It is said that he is quite devoted to his art, and will not go into society at all.'

'No, my brother has ten excellent reasons for living quietly and not being

called from his work by fashionable society.'

'Ten reasons! Do you mean ten children? How very charming! Now you can tell me, Miss Selby. Is that sweet "Invalid" painted from his wife or from a common model? Major Granby argued with me. I said that it could be painted from no common woman, and he said that he *knew* the original was a model who sat to an artist at half-a-crown an hour, and walked home afterwards in a green velvet hat trimmed with red roses.'

'Major Granby was wrong, then. The picture in the Academy this year is a portrait of Mrs. Selby, with her youngest infant. She has been ill since its birth. That picture of the cherubs was painted from two of the other children. They are all nice-looking, and my brother often uses one and another of them as models.'

Miss Rose felt a little reflected honour

shedding a mild glory over her, in an unusual manner, upon finding out how Miss Courtney regarded 'poor Frank.'

'How I should like to know him, and to see them all! Aunt Sarah, is it not possible for me to meet them while I am here?'

'Yes, yes, certainly, my love,' said Sir Theophilus. 'We are having a dinner-party next Thursday; send Mr. Selby a card, my dear. Augusta, remind your aunt in the morning; I should like a chat with him very much.'

'Oh, trust to me, uncle; I will write it myself. But the ten children could not all come to dine here too, and I must see them.'

'They are jolly looking children, I can assure you,' said Charles. 'I saw some of them one day. Miss Rose, may I not drive you and Augusta down one afternoon? You would like to see your brother, and perhaps Mrs. Selby would

give us a cup of tea, to save Augusta from being over-tired.'

'A very nice plan,' said Sir Theophilus. 'A very good thought, Charlie. I am sure my old friend Frank will be glad to see you, and his wife too.'

'They are living in a very quiet way at Polzeath,' said Miss Rose, in secret consternation at this proposal.

Extremely proud, and as ignorant of the world as she was proud, she had no idea of the light in which a successful artist was regarded, and was divided between pleasure that her brother's family should be recognized at all, in any manner, and fear as to how they would comport themselves beneath the ordeal.

'Augusta will not mind that,' said Charles. 'Everyone knows what sea-side lodgings are, and nobody makes any fuss over a cup of tea.'

'You must take my card for me, my

love,' said Lady Sarah. 'I have not the pleasure of knowing Mrs. Selby.'

This settled the matter with Miss Rose. That her ladyship should send her card voluntarily, that the visit should take place upon such lines of dignity, seemed to her an honour to Mabel, to her brother, to their whole family, which must not be lost to them.

Dinner was here announced, and the conversation turned to other subjects, to which the poor lady could pay no attention, so busy was her mind in debating how she could manage for the best appearance to be made. Mabel must be duly warned of the honour impending; it would never do for Miss Courtney to descend upon her without preparation. Suppose she were set down to thick bread and butter, and tea without milk, in that untidy parlour, with the smell of magilp and wet paint reeking in the air!

The subject was again referred to before they retired for the night.

'Your people would not really mind our driving down, Miss Rose, would they?' asked Charles.

'Oh! no, it would be a great pleasure,' said she, untruthfully.

'Then how would the day after to-morrow suit?' asked he. 'Augusta seems to be so tired after her journey that she had better have a day of rest first; but we really want her to be amused in a quiet way, and this seems to be just the thing for her.'

'Quite so,' said Miss Rose, relieved that she had one day of grace.

She went to the housekeeper, and held a secret conclave with her. She and Mrs. Symons were always on the best of terms, and the good woman now quite comprehended the difficulty, and promised every assistance.

Next morning she walked early to see her sisters, and secure their aid in putting the best foot foremost on this important occasion.

'My dear Rose,' cried Miss Selby, as she sat down among them, 'is that young lady come to stay for all the rest of her life? We saw her luggage go by. Were all those packages and boxes hers?'

'Yes, she does not seem to think the quantity at all unreasonable. But she needs five changes of dress every day, I hear, so a good many boxes are necessary.'

'Five changes a day? Never, surely?'

'Yes, I believe so.'

'Why, she can do nothing else than pull her gowns off and on!'

'Her maid does that, and her mistress reads poetry the while. You never saw such elegance, sisters. It all looks so simple and girlish that no one would think of the cost of it all; but my opinion is

that there is nothing more expensive than simplicity, particularly artistic simplicity. You should have seen her last night; all was in such good taste, and looked so simple that it was only by degrees that a woman could have realized the thought and study and money which it must have cost. Everything had an air of freshness that is very charming; it does one good to see so many pretty things for one while. She wears scarcely any jewelry except rings, only real flowers, and it is beautiful to see how unconscious she is of her fineries. They seem to be a part of herself. She twisted a black lace mantilla over her head and around her shoulders last night, with a cast of her arm, and strolled over the grass and the gravel, in her exquisitely worked Indian muslin dinner-dress, talking of poetry and art with Charles as if she had not twenty or

thirty pounds' worth of lace alone on her back.'

'I am thinking, Rose, of your things. How will you manage there with your one black silk gown and one grenadine dinner-dress?'

'Oh! it does not matter for me, you know. I am not destined to charm the heir. Nobody notices me, and Lady Sarah knows quite well what we can afford and what we cannot. She does not do like this herself, though she has smartened herself up a little since her niece came. There is going to be a grand dinner-party next week, and I shall tell her ladyship that you want me at home that evening, and only appear in the evening, though Frank is to be invited. I must try to put some sort of gown together for the garden-party, and that partly brought me over this morning, to consult with you about

it. Do you think that you could get Rebecca Pascoe in to do the sewing, and fit up my old dove-coloured silk with nun's veiling, or something cheap? We are to drive to Polzeath to-morrow, and to Bedruthan the day after, and I am wanted to chaperone.'

'We will do our best, dear,' said Miss Selby; 'but Polzeath! Will they go to the house? I wish we could let Mabel know! What will she do? They will all certainly be at sixes and sevens, and nothing can be bought there at a moment's notice!'

'Yes, I must say that I felt vexed when Miss Courtney discovered that our brother was the artist, and expressed such a desire to make his acquaintance. It seems that poor Frank's picture of Mabel and Désirée is thought something out of the common, and my young lady is crazy to see the originals—the woman, she says, that half

London is in love with. I could not help it. Sir Theophilus himself said that Charles should drive us over, and to-morrow is the only convenient day for a week. I went to Mrs. Symons, and the good creature was ready to help at once, as she always is. "It will only be afternoon tea, Miss Rose," said she, "and Matthews shall drive down in the pony-cart this evening, and take some fruit and cream." I thought that you and Letitia would like to take advantage of the opportunity to drive there too; and you might take flowers, and lend our silver. Everything in that house is so very common.'

'Mabel ought to know beforehand, certainly,' said Miss Selby. 'Frank will have the little ones without decent clothes on their backs else, or something equally dreadful. We will go, Rose. What time will Matthews call for us?'

'Not till about four or five o'clock. I

settled that, because I thought that you could have an early tea first, and you would need a little time to pack up the things, and cut the flowers.'

'And it will be pleasantly cool by that time, too. We will go, Rose.'

CHAPTER VII.

HUMBLE VISITING.

Meantime, festivity of a different style was on foot among the party at Polzeath on the next day.

Mrs. Selby's nurse, a valued and confidential woman, who had lived with her ever since she was married, and nursed all the children, had a friend in London who came from this neighbourhood; in fact, the Mrs. Rosewarne before alluded to. This woman had desired some relations of hers, in the village near Polzeath, to show every hospitality to Mrs. Nurse, and an invitation to tea was the result.

Nurse loved all the young people as if they were her own. She was proud of their talents, their beauty, their merry spirits, and thought no children were ever like them. Out of them all, perhaps, she was most proud of Stephen and Amanda, who were certainly lovely children. Everybody admired them, particularly little Stephen, who had a look of heaven about his large blue eyes, which caused many a person to remark, 'The Selbys will never rear that child.' Whenever Frank heard this he always laughed, though somewhat uneasily, and declared Steenie to be 'a pickle.'

'The child is a thorough impostor,' he would say. 'That angelic look is a cover for all the wickedness under the sun. If any outrageous mischief is done in the house, I always ask first, "Where is the dear cherub?" He is sure to be at the bottom of it.'

Nathless, if Frank Selby had a favourite child among his quiver-full, that child was well known to be Steenie. Steenie's little hand was the most often clasped in his; at Steenie's cot he lingered the longest upon his nightly pilgrimage among the sleeping little ones; upon his broad shoulder was Steenie most frequently hoisted for a ride down stairs.

Once he painted the child in the arms of an angel, floating, among gathering shades, towards the evening star. Mrs. Selby saw it, half-completed, and burst into tears upon observing the wistful pathos of those beautiful eyes, looking backwards towards earth, over the angel's shoulder.

'How *could* you do it, Frank!' cried she. 'How could you, how could you!'

Frank dashed the canvas across the studio, and comforted her.

'You shall not be vexed, wifie,' said he. 'I will never finish it.'

Nor did he. But his inconsistent wifie gathered it up, put it away among her most cherished treasures, and—never looked at it again.

This had happened two years before, but Steenie still preserved much of that remarkable look, and his face was as beautiful as ever.

Wherever he went, Amanda trotted after him like a little dog;—a pretty contrast to her brother, for she was round, dimpled, and rosy, the picture of healthy childish loveliness, which aroused no tremors at all regarding her health.

Nurse was anxious to take the children with her to this tea-party, partly to show them off, partly that her own absence for the afternoon might be less missed by her mistress. The young ladies would set the tea at home, and take care of the baby.

Mrs. Selby gave ready permission; and the donkey-cart, which was going to the

town for stores that the village shop could not yield, would convey the three to Captain Brunton's house, and bring them back again later in the day.

A happy party they were, as they prepared to set forth, and all the family gathered at the gate to see them depart.

Nurse had dressed her darlings in their best clothes, to set them off to advantage; Steenie appeared in all the glory of his clean white sailor suit, and broad-brimmed straw hat, set far back upon his clustering curls; while Amanda looked like a little fresh rose-bud, in her delicate print frock, and wide pale pink sash.

They were lifted into the cart first; and, seated side by side, the fond old woman regarded them with sinful exultation, displayed by sundry sniffs and coughs of vast significance to attract the attention of her mistress, to whom she winked and signed to admire them.

'A proper lad, b'aint he, ma'am,' said she, as Steenie kicked at the cart in impatience to start; for he had the whip and reins in his hands, and meant to drive.

'Make haste, nurse,' cried he. 'Jenny won't stand. Don't dawdle. Mamma! please don't hinder her.'

Mrs. Selby laughed, and bent down to kiss the sweet face of her little girl, craned up to meet her embrace.

'Dood-bye, mamma,' she said, 'dood-bye, sisters, dood-bye all.' And she waved a tiny hand.

'Good-bye, my pet; be a good little maid.'

'Yes, mamma, me be a dood itty maid. Gee up, Steenie.'

Mr. Stephen gee'd up, and off they went, jolting over the sand, turning a corner, and mounting the long steep hill, where wreaths of honey-suckle hung in fragrant masses from the high hedges, and the

fragile wild roses had cast their dainty petals on every side. Butterflies spread their richly-hued wings to the sun, as they rested on pearly and rose-hued bramble flowers; and bees hummed busily over many a wayside plant and bush of blossoming ivy.

Red plums and luscious pears were ripening against the stone walls of the cottages; and, in the gardens without, thrift and lavender, spicy clove pinks and stately lilies grew among fruit-trees and scarlet beans.

All lay, blazing with colour, beneath the glowing beams of the afternoon sun, as the donkey-cart, with its joyous load, drew up at the gate of the house where dwelt the host,—a retired sea-captain of the homely type,—who stood there to receive them.

'Well, sir,' said he, 'you've come then. I be right glad to see 'ee, and the little

miss, too. Mrs. Brown, your servant, ma'am.'

He helped them all out, and led them into the house, where his wife, in her best black silk gown, had made preparations, in the most hospitable style, for the entertainment of the guests whose visit was so great a pride and delight to her.

A party of her most select friends had been invited to meet Mrs. Brown from London town, and the little lady and gentleman, the fame of whose beauty had already reached them, and whom they were prepared to admire sufficiently even to satisfy their nurse's exorbitant demands in that line.

But Steenie had no idea of standing still in a stuffy little hot parlour, to be flattered by a set of old women. As soon as he had looked at the stuffed birds, the flying fish, the albatross's bill, and the foreign shells, etc., which ornamented the room, he was

eager to go out. He slipped his hand into the brown hard one of the old sailor.

'I want to see your pigs, sir,' said he.

'And so 'ee shall, my son,' replied the delighted old fellow, taking him off.

Poor Amanda gazed after their retreating figures with wistful looks. She would fain have gone to see the pigs too; she was never easy without being where Steenie was, but the most genteel of the visitors had taken her upon her knee, and was praising her curls and her eyes, and asking her questions which seemed to her very tiresome and stupid, though her sense of good manners forbade her to betray her impatience.

She sat on the good lady's knee, bolt upright, glancing this way and that for escape, much as one may often see a cat, suffering from unwelcome attentions; not responding in the least to her admirer's hugging and kissing. She heard her brother's

voice in eager discussion with the captain; she heard the peals of laughter, the bluff hearty tones of the man's voice alternating with the shrill treble of the child's;—something very delightful was proceeding between them, and here was she, obliged to 'behave prettily,' and answer this silly old woman's foolish questions.

'And who made this pretty frock for you, my dear?'

'Nurse, ma'am.'

'And does nurse make these long curls, too, for you?'

'Yes, ma'am.'

'And who gave you these big blue eyes, my pretty?'

'God, ma'am.'

Her listeners were taken aback by the literal answer, rebuking their folly in its innocence; but Amanda could not bear much more. After being pressed again closely in the good lady's arms, and kissed

till she felt uncomfortably hot, she gasped—seeing no help for her escape—

'Oh! put me down, *please*, for Jesus' sake, amen!'

The women looked at each other, startled yet amused. Nurse came to the rescue, and the little maid was freed to run away to the more wholesome company of the old captain, her brother, and the pigs.

She found Steenie bestriding the old sow, and vainly attempting to ride it, while the creature preferred lying down to bask in the mud. His white garments betrayed the marks of frequent falls in the attempt; but, nothing daunted by that, Amanda would have eagerly joined in the sport had not the captain proposed a ride in his 'one wheeled carriage' instead, and introduced her to his large wheelbarrow, wherein, seated on an old sack side by side, he drove the happy children up and down the lane to their hearts' content.

He lifted them up in turns to gather red quarrendon apples from the tree for themselves; he took them to see the bees working in the hive; he presented them with portions of a wasp's nest, and showed them the big hole in the hedge from which it had been dug; he pointed to the wall where they might see the swallow sitting on her second brood of young ones; he let them gather fruit for themselves and to 'take home to mamma.' There was no end to the delights of this visit.

They were unwilling to come in for tea, though the gooseberry pasties with cream, and the currant 'nobbies,' were by no means to be despised. There was a wail when nurse announced it was time to prepare for going home, and the donkey-cart loomed in sight.

'But we may come again, mayn't we, captain?' asked Steenie.

'Surely, surely, sir. I'll be rare and

glad to see 'ee whenever Mrs. Brown will bring 'ee.'

Amanda put her soft little arms round the old man's neck, and gave him a good hug as he lifted her into the cart.

'And now you can see me drive!' cried Steenie, setting off full tilt.

'Master Steenie, Master Steenie!' exclaimed nurse, 'you'll upset us; don't go so fast, Master Steenie—oh, oh, oh!'

She might as well have called to the wind; Master Steenie stood up in front, wild with excitement, shouting to the donkey, flourishing his whip, and inciting the creature to put forth its greatest speed. The hill was steep, the road downwards; Steenie had taken them all by surprise with his sudden start, and left the proper owner of the vehicle behind; he came racing after, calling to the animal, which, frightened by the cries and feeling the cart upon its haunches, galloped faster than ever

till, at a turn in the road, the wheel went up into the hedge and upset the whole freight.

Out went nurse, sprawling, scolding, and terrified; out went Steenie, to have his enthusiasm cooled in the stream that ran by the roadside; out went Amanda, with her head in the basket of raspberries, the captain's parting gift to her; out went parcels and packages of every description, all over the road, and the donkey kicked and tugged in vain to free himself from the impedimenta.

For a moment nurse's wrath was silenced by a sick horror, for Amanda lay, as if insensible, on the road, and the crimson pool around her had the most gruesome appearance of blood. She thought the child was killed, and was speechless with terror; but the next minute the little girl, recovering herself, sat up, with crushed raspberries sticking all over her, and began

to howl lustily. Steenie arose from the stream, with a great rent in the seat of his knickerbockers, whence a long rag of shirt hung fluttering, plastered with mud and green stains from head to foot, half inclined to cry too, for he was a good deal shaken, yet wanting to be manly at the same time. Roguish excitement not yet wholly quenched, danced in his mischievous, laughing eyes, yet a look of deprecation of the scolding he expected sobered him somewhat, while he was soaked from head to foot, water running off him in all directions.

Up came the donkey's owner, up ran the captain; in the distance might be seen the old sailor's wife and her company hurrying to the scene of misfortune; and, at the same moment, up dashed the pony-carriage from Tregarthen, with the spick and span groom driving, and the two Miss Selbys sitting up in state.

Nurse began to revenge herself for her alarm by scolding. She took Steenie by the shoulder, and shook him in her indignation, holding Amanda under her other arm, roaring, her legs kicking behind her.

'You naughty, naughty boy!' she raved, 'you might have killed yourself and your little sister—that you might—and you'll catch your death of cold now, as like as not: you're wet to the skin. Only look at him, ma'am! And his best clothes,—and Miss Amy—her new frock and sash—spoiled, sir—ruined, ma'am. Did ever anyone see such a child in their lives—making the donkey run away like that! Oh! you bad boy—if ever I take you out with me again! That's all.'

The Miss Selbys were as righteously indignant as she. How well that this had not happened next day, when Miss Courtney and Mr. Charles Grenfell might have been passing! How providential it was

that they had come to prepare, and give notice! The captain was sorry that the child's pride and pleasure should have come to grief so suddenly; his wife was afraid that the little ones were hurt, or would take cold; but the Tregarthen groom, being young, had the greatest difficulty in repressing a burst of laughter, for he had a strong sense of the ludicrous, and the whole scene was so absurd.

Nurse caught the lurking grin on his face, which turned the tide of her wrath upon him. Could he do nothing but sit there, grinning like a Cheshire cat? Why did he not offer to drive them home before the shakes took hold of the child? Could he not be of some good in his useless life? Oh! that she was back in London again, where nothing of this sort ever could happen!

Rebuked, and by a great effort regaining his good manners, Matthews produced

a rug in which he wrapped the little boy, taking him between his knees, and making room for nurse by his side. Her aunts received Amanda into the comforting folds of a large woollen shawl, the captain whispered to Steenie, 'Never mind, sir, no great harm done; better luck next time,' and the party started again, though in much lower spirits than before, Matthews tipping a knowing wink at the captain, with a half glance towards nurse, to which the sailor slyly responded.

Thus they reached Polzeath, greatly subdued, and the children were put to bed at once.

Mabel stole up to their bedsides, and gave them hot milk, and sugar upon their bread and butter, which was a great comfort to them. After partaking of this, sleep soon ended their troubles. If the Duchess did not scold, no great sense of guilt oppressed their little hearts.

CHAPTER VIII.

PREPARATION.

After seeing the children in bed and comfortable, the Duchess descended to the sitting-room, and found the conclave assembled.

Dorothea was looking like a thunder-cloud; Horace quizzical; her mother nervous; her father twiddling the spade guinea which hung at the end of his watch-chain, in the fidgetty manner that she knew so well as indicating that he wanted to be free for work, while his present company prevented his escape.

Miss Selby turned to her upon her entrance.

'I am telling your mother, my dear, that Miss Augusta Courtney wishes to make your father's acquaintance, and to see you all; so Mr. Grenfell will drive her and your Aunt Rose over to-morrow to tea, and that we do, most sincerely, trust to you all for having things neat and proper to receive them. Do not, I beg of you, allow such an exposure to take place as occurred this evening, but *try* to preserve the family credit in such eyes as those.'

'It was an accident this evening, auntie,' said Mabel, glancing from one to the other. 'Indeed, we could not help it.'

'The poor children need not have been in low company, my dear,' replied her aunt, severely.

Mabel coloured high, but held her tongue. Not so Dorothea.

'If you will kindly write down a list of

your objections and your requirements, aunt, we will take them into consideration,' said she, 'but I may plainly tell you, beforehand, that *we* think our father and our mother the best judges of what their own children shall do, and the company they should keep.'

The grin on Horace's face became wider, and he turned to the window to hide it.

'Well, well, my dear,' remonstrated Frank. 'Your aunt means well, don't be a little spitfire. You express yourself too vehemently.'

'Papa! If the family credit is not kept up enough by *your* being at the head of it, I am sorry for the family, that's all!'

Mrs. Selby's remonstrating eyes turned towards her eldest daughter's face, and the Duchess answered the mute appeal.

'Aunt Letitia,' said she, 'do you feel rested enough to come out to mamma's seat outside, and see the tide coming in?'

'Thank you, dear,' said Miss Letitia.

Horace sprang to assist her in rising, and gave her his arm.

'Come, Dolly,' said her sister; and the four moved away.

Gentle Miss Letitia hesitated for a few moments, then said,

'Don't be vexed with your Aunt Elizabeth, dears. The family at Tregarthen are very kind to all of us, and have been our friends all our lives. It is a little matter to please their guest now, you will help us kindly, won't you?'

'Yes, yes, aunt. Dolly never meant that she would not. We will all do our best, depend upon it. Trust to us.'

'I will stand upon my head to amuse the girl, if you like,' said Horace.

'Now, Horry, you are to be sensible,' said the Duchess. 'He will be good, aunt. I will answer for them both. Their bark is always worse than their bite. Let

them talk, they will act as you would wish.'

'I do trust to you, Mabel. You seem to have a great deal of common-sense. Do make your father look nice. He is such a fine-looking man if he does himself justice; and don't let him talk nonsense which people do not understand.'

'We will *really* attend to your wishes, aunt dear,' said Horace, softened by her evident anxiety. 'Father shall talk like the Lord Chief Justice, and I will be no more of a fool than I am made. Depend upon it that all will go rightly. Dolly will be good, or I will shake her myself.'

Dorothea made a *moue* at him; but, as she stood behind her aunt, it was a relief to her feelings which did no harm.

'Elizabeth made a batch of sponge-cake for you, with her own hands, this morning, when she heard that they were going to have tea here to-morrow. She has a very

light hand for sponge-cake, and would make it herself so that it should be good, and I know that she is very tired.'

'It is extremely kind of her,' said Mabel.

'And she has brought down all the old family silver, of which she is so careful generally. Do take care that the best tea-pot does not become dinted. And we have done all we can else to help. Rose got a beautiful hamper of fruit for you, and will bring fresh cream to-morrow.'

'We are really very grateful, aunt, and you need not be anxious. Mamma and we all will do our very best to satisfy you.'

'Our level best,' echoed Horace.

Dorothea had moved a little away, and stood looking down upon the foaming waves, with her teeth set, and her fingers tightly laced together.

Miss Selby appeared.

'Come, Letitia, it will be very late

before we reach home, and Matthews is ready. Good-night, my dears. Mabel, do remember what I have said.'

'Yes, aunt, I have promised,' said she.

The phaeton drove off, and the family drew unanimously a breath of relief.

'Well!' sighed Horace. 'We are in for it.'

'In for what?' asked his father. 'It is only a boy and girl who want an excuse for a drive and a cup of tea. I don't see any reason for all this fuss. I have lost all that lovely sunset glow upon the cliff opposite.'

He walked off, and the twin boys ran after him, to stroll along the edge of the waves. Felicia and Evangeline went to bed; then out were poured the vials of Dorothea's wrath.

'I never heard of greater impertinence!' cried she. 'I cannot bear father to be stuck up for a pack of insolent fine people

to stare at, as if he were a wax image in Madame Tussaud's. Mamma! how can you bear it?'

'My love, it is not worth minding,' said her mother. 'Your father could bear worse than this, and it will please his sisters.'

'What do his sisters do to please him? What do they do for you, mamma? What business have they to treat us all like a raree show, because father paints so well? These foolish fine folks ought to be content with seeing what he chooses to show them in public. We want none of them here, nor have aunts any right to come hectoring and ordering us about in this manner.'

'I certainly did not bargain for this sort of thing when we came here, my dears; but, after all, it is natural that your aunts should be fond and proud of your father. He is rising very fast into

notice now, and *he* will never be patronized offensively. The more he is known, the less danger there is of that.'

'I was not thinking of that, mamma, but of my aunts.'

'Elizabeth always had a dictatorial temper, my love, and there has been little in her life to check it. We had better take people as we find them, especially when we cannot alter them. Now I think we must be quiet for a little. My head aches a good deal.'

'You had better go to bed, mamma,' said Mabel. 'Let me go up with you, and help you to undress. You are quite tired out with all this nonsense.'

'I think I had better go before your father and the boys return. Kiss me, Dolly love. Don't rave any more, my pretty. It won't hurt us to please those poor old ladies by entertaining their friends for once.'

'You are altogether too good and gentle, mamma. You don't think half enough of yourself,' said Dorothea.

Mrs. Selby stroked the girl's hot cheek, laid her own lovingly against it, and retired.

'Now, look here,' said the Duchess, coming downstairs again after attending to all her mother's wants. 'Look here, mamma must not be worried about this. She wants to please our aunts, and she has got to be obeyed, whether we like it or not. Let us look upon it as fun; we might, really, make a very pretty little entertainment of it, if we choose to put our wits to work. Let us forget Aunt Elizabeth, and fancy that we are getting up a charade or something.'

'I am with you,' said Horace. 'Aunt Elizabeth is an ancient feline development of femininity, but Aunt Letitia is a good sort, after all.'

'Yes, she will hear all about it. And perhaps it is just as well to show the others that we are not to be despised altogether. Let us do our best. Dolly dear, you are so clever about getting up pretty entertainments. Be good now, there's a dear.'

'Well,' heaving a deep sigh, 'it is more yours and Horace's affair than mine, after all. You two are our show ones; we can stick you up in attitudes, like a couple of Chelsea-china figures. Horace, borrow a crook in the morning, and annex a lamb. I will fill an apron with flowers for the Duchess, and crown her with roses. Then all you will have to do will be to simper at each other, like the idiots you are. Will that do?'

'Anything for a quiet life,' said her brother, with resignation in every look and tone.

'There is one thing, however, over

which I shall nail my colours to the mast,' declared Dorothea, vehemently. 'These people shall have something to stare at, if nothing else will serve you all, but none of them have found out that the Duchess sings so nicely; and, just remember, May, I won't have you making a concert-singer of yourself without pay, to please fifty Aunt Elizabeths.'

'Might she not, on my behalf, just warble "Baa, baa, black sheep"?' asked Horace, humbly. 'If we are to be shepherd and shepherdess, it would be so in character.'

Dorothea turned upon him in such wrath that he fled, in mock terror.

The Duchess woke up, next morning, feeling weary beforehand at the thought of all before her that day. It was always her part to smooth difficulties, and be a kind of *Deus ex machinâ* to every member of the household.

If Dorothea would take the entertainment in hand, no one was more capable, but she was sure to give them all plenty of work over it. However, Dorothea was complaisant.

'I think I see our way,' said she, as the four sisters were dressing. 'We must get the dining-table out into the garden, and have an exhibition of drawings and things in the big room. Then we can lay the tea, beforehand, in the open air. The tide will be coming in, and it is going to be a magnificent day.'

'Yes,' said Mabel. 'Mamma must be kept quiet till they come. Felicia, you take her breakfast up to her; and, when you have had your own, you could give her her morning reading.'

'What must I do?' asked Evangeline.

'You and the boys hurry up,' said Dorothea, 'and bring me in ever such a quantity of ferns, and honeysuckle, and

all the wild flowers you can get. Armfulls, you know.'

'Then, dear,' said the Duchess, 'I think that it would be best to lessen the crowd of us. You and the boys could take your dinners over to Grenaway and shrimp, could you not? Horace *must* stay, and the little ones, but you three had better keep out of the way.'

'Oh, mayn't I go too?' cried Felicia.

'Well,' doubtfully, 'we really shall want hands.'

'Let her go,' decided Dorothea. 'She and Eva can help beforehand. They would not be of much use when the people come, and we should only be tumbling over each other. Keep quite away, that is all. Don't get yourselves into some horrible mess, and then appear to shock our delicate nerves.'

'We will keep honestly out of sight,' promised both girls. 'Only give us enough to eat, Duchess.'

'Depend upon me for that,' said May; 'and I will save some fruit and cream for your suppers when all is over.'

'That will be jolly, but don't go without your share for us. Look after her, Dolly!'

'All right,' said Dorothea. 'We shall have enough to do, without gormandizing.'

Enough there really was to do! Mabel's troubles began as soon as she went to help nurse in dressing the children.

'What!' cried the old woman. 'Company to-day! And Master Steenie's best suit in this mess! And Miss Amy has no other frock fit to be seen in!'

'Do you think that you could wash the things in time? Steenie has another pair of tidy knickerbockers if his blouse were clean.'

'Wash, and get them up in time! Whatever are you talking of, miss?'

'Well, if it can't be done, you must

keep them out of the way, that's all,' said May. 'But papa is sure to want them seen.'

'Well, well, I must see what I can do, I suppose.'

Mabel went down stairs, to be met by Horace.

'I say, Duchess. What am I to do? I never brought a respectable suit of clothes with me? I never reckoned upon this, at a moment's notice, and you did cut the luggage so short.'

'You ought not to wear that, certainly,' said his sister. 'Have you nothing better?'

'Not a rag.'

'Well, dear, that velveteen coat is shabby, certainly, but it always suited you. You look well in anything.'

'You see, I reckoned upon borrowing the pater's if I had to go anywhere. We are so much of a size, and it was so unlikely that we should both have to go out

together. I brought my dress suit for him.'

'Could you not wear a coat of Guy's or Walter's?'

'They are such thread papers, and look at my chest, my dear girl,' said Horace, thumping that portion of himself.

'Your flannels are clean!' cried Mabel, triumphantly. 'You look very well in *them*, they will pass beautifully.'

'Hum, perhaps they will.'

Mabel went out into the kitchen, comforting herself with the reflection that she and Dorothea, at least, had clean print blouses to put on.

'Oh, Miss Selby!' said cook, upon seeing her. 'Here have the young ladies been wanting sandwiches to take away with them for dinner, but I can't cut enough. There is only this one small loaf besides what is on the breakfast-table, and the baker won't be here till evening.'

'Have you plenty of potatoes?' asked Mabel.

'Oh! yes, miss. I reckoned on they for dinner, and they there broad beans, with the cold beef. But Miss Eva saith there be company coming to tea. Whatever shall us do for bread? It did ought to be fresh, and thiccee loaf be as stale as stale.'

'We must make some potato pasties for the boys, cook. Peel plenty of potatoes while I wash up the breakfast things, and I will help as soon as I can. I will make splits for tea, my aunts brought us plenty of cake.'

'Very well, miss.'

'Duchess, Duchess!' screamed the two girls, running in. 'Dolly says she must have all our rush hats to turn into flower baskets! What must we wear?'

'You must wear your best ones, dear, then.'

'Nurse won't let us. She says that we shall make the white ribbons not fit to be seen.'

'Dolly's and mine are brown, take those, we can do without any this afternoon.'

'But if we spoil *them?*' said Eva.

'Don't if you can help it, there's a good girl. Be as careful as you can, and don't do any very wild thing. I daresay I shall be able to put it to rights if you only do a *little* harm.'

'All right, we will do our best;' and off they ran.

CHAPTER IX.

THE ARTISTIC FÊTE.

'BLESSED be the man who invented pasties,' cried Guy, fervently, a couple of hours later, as his sisters wrapped up a goodly supply of substantial food for the shrimping-party.

'How do you know that it was not a woman?' demanded Felicia.

'May her shadow never grow less, if it were,' ejaculated Walter.

'How could her shadow grow less?' piped a little voice. Stephen and Amanda

were none the worse for their upset the night before, and greatly excited with the bustle in the house.

'That, my good sir,' cried Guy, 'is one of those things which no fellow can understand, particularly no fellow of your inches.'

Steenie dashed at his brother's legs, and a friendly scuffle ensued.

'Come along!' cried Walter. 'Don't stand talking nonsense all day! Goodbye, good people. Don't expect us till you see us. Have you got the basket, Evie? Come along!'

'Now, little ones, keep out of the way, and don't get into mischief. Go and dig in the sand there, and make a great big mountain,' commanded Dorothea. 'Help me with the table, please, papa. Horace, put a hand.'

Mabel fled, leaving her to her own devices, and these occupied her father and

Horace, to the exclusion of all other ideas, for some hours.

Dinner was hurried over, and still all was chaos, but matters began to settle into shape soon after; and when Mrs. Selby appeared, wrapped up in her white shawl, she could not but confess that Dolly's skill had excelled itself.

Upon strings affixed to the walls all around the sitting-room were hung sketches enough to conceal the half-soiled paper, which was *not* artistic to begin with.

A pretty cosy corner had been contrived with a little drapery nailed round, and pillows, covered hastily to match, piled upon an old square ottoman, over which a Paisley shawl was spread, to conceal dilapidations. Green baize, which had wrapped up canvases for the journey, afforded the draperies;—what recked it that the cushion covers were but pinned on?

Small tables had been pressed into the service from the bed-rooms, the lovely Withiel flowers arranged upon them, among more finished drawings. Easels stood in good lights, supporting more pictures, and the half-finished 'Waifs and Strays,' being wet, took the place of honour upon the mantel-piece.

All of Horace's work, as well as that of his father, was brought into requisition, and Mr. Selby had insisted upon Dorothea's own flower-drawings being put out by themselves upon a separate table; reared up by ingenious contrivances, concealed by natural blossoms, tastefully arranged.

All the seats had been removed from the apartment, and placed in the little enclosure outside, dignified by the title of garden; in which nothing grew but feverfew and southernwood, intermingled with a few stubby wallflowers, now gone to seed.

The views of sea and cliff, crags, uplands, sandy shore, and wide expanse of sky, were too lovely for anything further to be missed, and Mrs. Selby was established beneath her awning, in a comfortable chair, her baby on her knee; and, looking round her, she pronounced that 'Dolly is really very clever.'

'Has she not made the table pretty!' said Mabel.

'Extremely so, what taste the child has.'

All the Withiel garden and green-house flowers had been devoted to decorations in the interior; upon the tea-table were only wild ones.

Four coarse rush hats, turned upside down, made rustic baskets, by the help of brown paper handles pinned around them, and wreaths of ivy leaves. Filled with ferns, poppies, and meadow-sweet, no table adornments could have been more charming.

In the centre rose a proud pyramid of choice fruit: peaches, grapes, and plums, confected with tinted sycamore leaves and long trails of honeysuckle, and delicious perfume wafted from this and the dishes of ripe raspberries, as a gentle breeze breathed over them.

Mabel's splits were also delicious to look at, and Miss Selby's sponge-cake completed the appetizing feast. Only the cream was yet to come; the visitors would bring that with them.

'Where are the children?' asked Mrs. Selby.

'Somewhere about,' replied Mabel. 'Nurse has got up their things beautifully, and will dress them presently. She is putting herself tidy just at this moment. They cannot be hungry, for they were in the kitchen with me before I went up to help you to dress. I gave them some-

thing to eat, and they went out again to play.'

'And Horace is changing his clothes, and Dolly putting herself neat? Your father, my dear. Do just see that he is ready, and then put on your own fresh blouse.'

Mr. Selby was in the sitting-room, still shifting the places of the sketches, and criticising them.

'This is really a very good bit of colour that Horace has turned out,' quoth he. 'The boy has it in him. Art will be a very fair refuge for him if he should miss his Civil Service appointment.'

'I wish he were reading harder for it, or that we could give him some coaching for it,' sighed Mabel. 'A certain income and prospect of pension in his old age would be such a good thing for him.'

'So it would be, you are right. But I should not like him to be banished to

India for all the remainder of my natural life. I should miss the young scamp sadly.'

'Papa, do put that down now, and come to change your coat.'

'My coat? What must I change it for?'

'Now, papa, we are all to be in our best bibs and tuckers, you know, and just look at your hands! Miss Courtney is sure to spy out the hands that painted the "Invalid," and to be shocked to see them in that state. Let me brush your hair for you, too; you look like an owl in an ivy-bush now.'

'Well, I will resign myself to my fate. Just change the place of those two drawings of Dolly's, my dear. The jar of flowers should be to the left. Bring those foxgloves further forward, more into the light. That is by far the best bit of work which the maid has done yet.'

'Yes, papa, but do come. We shall be caught; and I have to dress myself when you are done. They will be here in a few minutes.'

'Mab! They are down upon us!' cried Horace, putting his head in at the door.

'Come, papa,' urged Mabel, pulling him away.

Matthews, the young groom, making observations upon the state of the tide the previous evening, and reporting the result to his master upon his return, made it plain that they must arrive early, or they would be unable to visit the one cavern of which the place boasted, and which could only be entered at the ebb of spring tides.

Miss Courtney wished particularly to see this, and to gather the *asplenium marinum* which grew there in such profusion, fringing the rock where it rose above reach of the waves.

By a superhuman effort, between the time when the carriage was first descried at the top of the hill, and the introduction of the guests, the Duchess made her father presentable in his velvet coat, and sent him in. He grimaced at her, in mock misery, outside the door, and looked supernaturally polite as he passed its screen to greet his guests.

Mabel had swiftly vanished, but Dorothea witnessed the pantomime from where she stood: and, struggling with suppressed laughter, looked more dignified in youthful severity than usual, and answered Charles Grenfell's civilities with such frigid courtesy that he was positively afraid of her.

He was an attractive young man in appearance, tall and well-built. The gleam of white teeth as he smiled, and the look of kindly dark eyes out of a very brown face, generally won him smiles from any

girl whom he addressed; but Dorothea maintained a strict gravity.

'Yes, it was a lovely day.' 'The coast was certainly very fine.' 'Her mother was stronger, she was glad to say.' This was all he could draw from her.

But Miss Courtney was ecstatic. 'How charming! How sweet! How quite too exquisite was "Waifs and Strays!"' She must be shown the exact spot from which the picture was painted; she must see the dear little children themselves.

'By-and-by, my dear young lady,' said Mrs. Selby, with whom Miss Rose had been anxiously and mysteriously conferring hitherto; and Miss Courtney's attention was attracted by the water-colours.

Were they really Miss Dorothea Selby's own! Her own design and work, and all! Oh! if she could only paint like that. She doted upon water-colours, England's own especial branch of art, and she was

so passionately fond of flowers. Might she ask—would Miss Selby be affronted —but she would *so* like to have those foxgloves for a present to her sister. Would Miss Selby part with them? She hoped she was not asking too much?

Dorothea flushed crimson, and glanced at her father with a light of hope in her eyes. She had never sold a picture of her own yet, she had not expected to do so for a long, long time; could it be possible that this delightful damsel meant to confer this honour upon her? Would her father not laugh at the notion? She almost winced in anticipation of his ridicule.

But Frank was much pleased with the encouragement thus unexpectedly offered to his daughter; he took the negotiation upon himself, and concluded the bargain for a sum which was like a mine of gold to the happy girl. When the Duchess

entered upon the scene, she observed, to her amusement, that all Dorothea's scornfulness had vanished; all her indignation at the family being regarded in the light of a wild-beast show was gone; every vestige of her unwillingness to waste her time over the entertainment of their guests, —she was radiant with happiness, talking, smiling, pointing out all she most admired, making herself extremely pleasant, and evidently charming her new friend.

She was eager to display all the beauties of Polzeath,—lovely Polzeath, whose opalescent sea, stretching wide in blended emerald and blue, melted into tender grey on the horizon; whose long Atlantic rollers, rising regularly into crested, translucent waves, curled over, each in turn, to dash down showers of pearly whiteness; whose dark rocks, looming out, jagged and broken, rising in piled-up grandeur on either hand, were fringed with sam-

phire and sea-fern, and crowned by rich thymy grass on which fed herds of sheep, —where cloud-shadows, floating over the yellow sands, now softly swept athwart their expanse, and now left them illuminated by golden sunshine,—where flocks of seafowl, wheeling in the summer air, now swooped down to bathe their snowy breasts in the sunlit sparkling waters, and now rose high on the joyous breeze,— sweet Polzeath, bounded by Pentire's bold headland, rushing magnificently out into the sea; fair Polzeath, who, knowing it once, must not love it for ever?

If Polzeath, as its grim name of Hell Bay implies, can show a far different face, a face of wild storm and inky darkness, a leaping rage of waters, driving ships on the jagged teeth of cruel rocks, tearing them into fragments, and sparing neither man nor beast, youth nor age, in their fury, none could have thought it on that

sweet summer day, when the young people set forth to walk to the point where the cavern was to be seen.

'Miss Courtney,' said Dorothea, eager to please their visitor in every way, 'Miss Courtney must hear Mabel sing "Break, break," in the cavern.'

The Duchess smiled to herself at this change in her sister's mood; she did not much like the display, but was willing to play her part in the entertainment to please her sister and Aunt Rose, who was so well satisfied by the efforts made thus far that she had voluntarily whispered to her niece how well all had been managed.

So they walked out, over the springy grass, to the extreme verge of the point, where some former convulsion of nature had separated an abrupt pinnacle of rock from the mainland, leaving a mass of broken cliff between, over which the incoming tide would soon boil. A kind of

natural staircase led down to this place, and the entrance to the cave lay beneath their feet. It was a place full of wild beauty, new to Miss Courtney, who was accustomed to a softer style of landscape on the southern shores of Devonshire, where her home lay.

The scramble down the cliff; the peeps into deep, dark pools, the dwelling-place of exquisite sea-anemones among forests of pink coralline; the gathering of the *asplenium marinum*, all dank with salt moisture; the echoes of Mabel's fine voice in Tennyson's exquisite song, which suited the place so admirably, were all new and exhilarating pleasures to the girl trained in such conventionality.

She gave herself up to enjoyment in an unaccustomed manner; she forgot her little æstheticisms and affectations with these young people, so artistic in all their surroundings; so cultivated and intelli-

gent, yet so simple. They aroused all that was most natural and best in her, and she responded to the call in a manner which would have surprised those who only knew her in a London ball-room.

But, if she was charmed and charming, her cousin was something more. He leaned against the entrance to the cavern, watching Mabel's young figure lightly poised upon a little platform of rock; her hair slightly disordered by the breeze above her broad, low brow; her fingers interlaced; her sweet eyes gazing earnestly out seawards as her voice quivered with pathos over the words of her song; he listened to the low, trembling notes in which she uttered the wail

> 'But the tender grace of a day that has fled
> Will never come back to me,'

and something swelled within him, at the sound and the scene, that was to exercise

an influence over his whole life afterwards.

Horace hurried them all out of the cave as soon as the song was completed, for the tide was rising fast; but, the cliff once more surmounted, they all sat down to rest, and watched the surging waves tossing and leaping below with a voice of thunder, making them catch their breaths to think how recently they had stood where now would have been certain death.

Charles seated himself a little behind the Duchess; who, tired with her exertions, waited for him to talk, but he could not do so. There was plenty of conversation between Augusta, Dorothea, and Horace; Miss Rose put in a word now and then, but Mabel was silent; and Charles sat looking at the outline of her fair cheek, with the light locks of silky hair straying over it; at the slim hands folded together; at the large, earnest eyes looking thoughtfully into space, and wondered of what

she could be thinking, and whether there were, anywhere in this world, a more gracious sample of girlhood.

CHAPTER X.

STEPHEN AND AMANDA ARE LOST.

Miss Rose sat upon the sward in considerable perplexity while the young people chatted around her. She was forced to readjust all her estimate of her brother's family, and, being slow of mind, felt unexpected difficulty in so doing.

Miss Courtney did not talk to Dorothea and Horace from '*de haut en bas*,' she even seemed to defer to them in many ways.

They did not appear to be at all overwhelmed by any sense of her superiority, though they certainly knew of it; they

talked to her from the same level of equality, yet no one could accuse them of forwardness.

Dorothea differed frankly from her young guest upon several matters connected with art, and Miss Courtney admitted that she was right. Still more surprising, her nephew—she could hardly believe that she was not mistaken—but it seemed to her that he, even on more than one occasion, made gentle fun of the young lady, and that she did not resent it!

How very handsome Horace was! He lounged in an easy attitude, his straw hat tossed carelessly aside upon the grass, putting in a word or two, as if he were almost certain to know better than Miss Courtney.

That young lady dilated upon the beauties of a recent new school of art, which, she said, represented Nature in the beauty of mystery.

'Mystery? Oh! you mean mists,' said he.

'Yes, mists and fogs; realistic Nature, not as if she always displayed herself in spring verdure, or autumn richness of colouring, as some artists would represent.'

'Quite so, it would be very wrong of Nature to do that; I should be perfectly shocked at her bad taste if she did not shroud herself up in a fog generally.'

'You are laughing at me, Mr. Selby,' cried she, rather petulantly, 'but great brilliancy of varied colour *is* a mistake in a picture, certainly.'

'I am agreeing with you,' said he. 'Nature never shows us the example of brilliancy, as you say. Colour is not light; light is not truth; the Holy City will not come down from heaven upon rainbow-hued jewelled foundations, with a river of such brilliancy and clearness running through it that it looks like

transparent glass, reflecting the greenness of the tree of life, and the glory of golden gates set with pearls. All those descriptions mean nothing, and are not meant for lessons to us.'

'But, Mr. Selby, that is a description of heaven, not earth.'

'Again you are quite right. Light is heavenly, fogs are from the earth. We ought not to try to depict what is beyond us, we ought to be content with the fog of our present degradation.'

'Mr. Selby! Those are high thoughts, but——'

'If you are sufficiently rested, Miss Courtney,' said Mabel, 'I think we ought to go in. My mother will be ready for her tea.'

She had not been attending to the talk among the others, and her mother's tea seemed more important to her. They walked together, discussing colour, light,

and art; she led the van, and Charles came to her side.

'Do you paint, too, Miss Selby?'

'No, the eldest of so large a family as ours has too much need for practical work to study art. My mother is not very strong, and wants help.'

'But you make time to study music.'

'Not much. I sing by nature; my mother is musical, and used to sing very well; she taught us all as children, and I had more of her attention than the rest, because there were not so many of us when I was little. But I have only had a very few good lessons since.'

'You have made excellent use of them.'

'I do not play much, just enough to accompany a song. It requires too much practice to master execution. My sister Evangeline promises to play very well. There is no piano here, and she has gone for a long expedition with our younger

brothers to-day, or I would have liked you to have heard her play.'

'What an accomplished family yours is!'

'My father's profession throws us early among cultured people. Living in town, any talents which we may possess are easily trained.'

'You live in town, then, altogether?'

'Yes, in St. John's Wood, quite in the heart of things.'

They had reached the house, whence Mrs. Selby came out, looking uneasy.

'Have the little ones been with you, Mabel?'

'No, mamma. They were playing on the sand when I saw them last.'

'We cannot find them anywhere.'

'Not find them! They cannot be far off; I will go and look for them.'

'Nurse wanted to put them tidy, and send them in to be seen, and they have

disappeared. We cannot find them anywhere.'

'They are hiding somewhere, for fun. It is one of Steenie's tricks. Don't worry yourself, mamma; they will soon run in.'

'I wish you could go and look for them, my dear.'

'Allow me to assist you,' said Charles, a little eagerly.

Mabel did not feel very willing to accept his company, for she was doubtful as to the condition in which the children might be discovered. They might appear as such horribly grubby little creatures after having been left so long to their own devices.

There was no help for it, however; and, before long, she would have been thankful to have found them under any circumstances.

Up and down she went; searching the house, the hay-loft, the favourite play-

places among the rocks, calling, calling, calling to the baby darlings whose voices never answered.

'They are in one of the cottages, no doubt,' said Horace, and he sped away to inquire.

There were but half-a-dozen cottages, and they stood close together, at the foot of the hill. They were easily searched, but the people in them had not seen the children that day.

Had they gone to see old Captain Brunton? They had been so happy on their visit to him the day before. Perhaps they had gone to offer their company again to him.

Horace tore up the long hill, feeling no doubt but what he had thus solved the puzzle.

'They may have gone over the fields to Grenaway, after the boys,' said Mabel. 'Two of our brothers and two younger

sisters are there, shrimping,' said she to Charles Grenfell.

'I will hasten there by the field-path and find them,' said he. 'Don't make yourself uneasy, Miss Selby; there is some simple explanation of their disappearance, I daresay. We will soon find them.'

He ran off immediately; and Mabel, trying to suppress the terrible lurking fear at her heart, returned to the house to persuade her mother to take her tea. She must not become exhausted, and it would be a relief if the lady visitors, at any rate, would leave them.

Mrs. Selby, white and trembling, took the cup which her daughter brought to her; and Miss Courtney was persuaded to join her; but, without comprehending the dangers feared by the others, she perceived their overwhelming anxiety, and would not leave them in it.

She and Miss Rose sat with Mrs. Selby, and the girl took the poor lady's hand in hers, and fondled it tenderly.

'Keep up heart, dear Mrs. Selby,' she said, over and over again. 'Waiting is very hard to bear, but God is merciful. He will not afflict you beyond your strength. Try to trust Him, try to be calm.'

But her hand was squeezed tightly as the only response, and the pale lips were silent, pressed closely together to control their quivering.

'You are very kind to me, my dear,' said she once, but could speak no more.

Miss Rose hovered about them, walked uneasily in and out of the house, conferred with nurse, and moved hurriedly to ask each of the searchers, as one and another appeared, from time to time, with agitated face,

'Have you any trace of them?'

No answer beyond a shake of the head was ever given.

Every creature about the place had joined in the search. All the cottagers, all the labourers, all the women and children, were running about looking in the same places over and over again, calling the children's names, now fancying that they heard a reply, now imagining that they saw a bit of white belonging to their clothes, but running fast to the spot they always came slowly and sadly away.

Horace came back, accompanied by old Captain Brunton, but with no tidings. Charles returned with the frightened boys and girls, who had never seen a trace of the little ones. People were searching all over the surrounding cliffs and fields, in groups of twos and threes, but not over the beach, for the rising tide was surely and rapidly covering, one after another, every possible lurking-place.

It was an unusually high tide, and the long white rollers washed steadily over the high cliffs about the point, over the low cliffs around the house; they stretched in long lines all across the mile-wide beach, still advancing, with fatal precision, like the march of doom. Long ago, a faint track of light little feet upon some soft sand had been obliterated by the water. When first perceived, they could be followed but a little way. The searchers had nothing left to guide them.

Suddenly old Jem, grandfather of the boy who drove the donkey-cart, remembered that, a week ago, he had taken Steenie with him to the farm on Pentire Head, where the farmer's wife had made much of him, given him bread and cream, and asked him to come and see her again. It was a long way off, but he might have taken his little sister there. He would go and see.

'I will go with you,' cried Charles. 'Is that your dog? Let us take him too.'

'Ay,' said the old man; 'seek, Ranger, seek. Little Master Steenie was always fond of he, sir.'

Charles sickened at the sound of the word 'was.' The old man betrayed, by that slight slip of the tongue, that his hope of finding the children alive was gone. Nevertheless, this was one slender chance yet, one stone to be turned, and he tried to depend upon it.

They took their long walk to the farm, but the people there had seen nothing of the children. All the men set out to return with them, searching as they went every furze-bush and hollow, every fence and hillock on the way, but without a sign. And the tide rose higher and higher, and the shades of evening began to gather, aud the wretched father, the most tender-

hearted man in the world, for all his jovial laugh, his merry voice, his hearty ways, having no more stamina within him than a child himself wherewith to rise against trouble, sank wholly beneath it. Seeking his never-failing comforter, he wailed out,

'Oh! wifie, wifie, our little children! Our pretty little children! Oh! wifie, wifie!'

Stronger than he at that moment, she put her arm round his neck and drew his head down upon her loving bosom, where he wept uncontrollably. His sister and Augusta wept too, but the afflicted mother shed no tears, she controlled herself to succour him who was so dear to her heart that it had no room for self in it.

CHAPTER XI.

WHEAL PENTIRE.

Little Stephen and Amanda had been rather lonely among their many brothers and sisters, all so busy in various ways with schooling, lectures, and classes. They were inseparable companions, Steenie being the adventurous, and Amanda the complaisant and devoted.

Mamma generally taught them; but their own health recently, and the birth of little Désirée, had interfered greatly with the regularity of their lessons; and Mabel, who struggled to fill her mother's

place in every possible manner, was too busy in household matters to attend very regularly to them. Thus they had, perforce, been left much to their own quaint ideas and devices for amusement.

They liked being models to their father, for he told them stories all the time they were standing for him, and Frank told capital stories. The pity was that he became carried away by his own imagination as a raconteur, and related his histories with a realism which impressed his hearers by a sense of their actual truth, and he did not perceive for himself how literally the young, inexperienced minds believed in them.

The children's heads were filled up with a wonderful jumble of fairies, witches, genii, imps, sprites, and hobgoblins; for it was Frank's way to toy with the richness of his own imagination, to throw out ideas, new to his childish auditors, and

amuse himself with their original remarks upon them.

Classical, English, Continental, and Biblical history were thus all mixed up together, in a glorious hotch-potch, and left to be unravelled, bit by bit, as they grew older, and their intellects developed. The mental food so lavishly bestowed upon them over these sittings, might—probably would—give life and reality to many a graver study in later years; but meantime were in no less confusion because believed in so implicitly.

The scripture language and peculiar phraseology of Methodism, so rife among the humbler classes in Cornwall, had lately been added to the medley, and given them new phases of thought; for their old nurse had become impressed by the conversation of the new acquaintances whom she had met in the village and adjacent farms, among whom was more than one

lay preacher; and the little ones had gone with her occasionally to visit them.

Pious deaths of holy children, wonderful conversions from depths of sin, and such like stories, reached them from many a tract and little book through this channel, but Undine had been the story told to them by their father over and over again, while they were standing for 'Waifs and Strays,' it had impressed their imaginations greatly, and they had held much grave discussion with him upon the nature of kobolds and gnomes, water-sprites and fays, until their task was ended.

In these conversations, Frank Selby had sported, in his fantastic way, more than usual with their innocence and ignorance to his own entertainment, without much consideration for the confusion which he was creating in such very young minds. It was his habit to play with earnest subjects, throwing out stray hints of thought,

like tendrils of some free-growing climber, to catch hold of support anywhere that they could, twine themselves over any support that offered, and root themselves or not, according to the ground whereon they might light.

But the children's part in their father's picture being completed, they were free to play upon the beach; dabbling barefooted in shallow pools, among the coralline and feathery olive seaweed, where shrimps lived, and little fishes, and tiny crabs; to pick up shells,—yellow, blue, pink, and white; to watch the leaping waves come roaring in, with their snowy crests of foam; and think of the poor merman in the poem which their father had repeated to them, whose wife had deserted him and his littlo children, and who went to seek her upon those wild sea-horses, foaming and fretting.

It was not to be supposed that any harm

could come to them here, for among so many brothers and sisters, some of the elders were generally about them; while mamma sat in the small level enclosure outside the front door, among the tamarisk and wormwood and lad'slove, which alone flourished there. With Désirée on her knee, and her sewing at hand, she sat there nearly all day; old nurse took them to bathe, and went out with them in the afternoons when the housework was done; and papa often smoked his pipe, resting, full length, on the sand close by.

They had never wandered away before, and no one dreamt that any harm could have come to them on this first occasion upon which they had been left alone to their own devices.

What could have become of them, with what view or plan they could have been guided in their disappearance, no one could imagine.

And what had become of them? For long had they played, quietly and happily, upon the sand. They built castles, laid out gardens around them, with shells, pebbles, and seaweed; then, tired of this amusement, they lay, rolling upon the dry beach, in the sun, talking according to their wont, in confidence one with the other.

'Mannie,' quoth Stephen, 'did you hear what Guy said, this morning, about people's shadows? I could not understand him. He said might the shadow of the woman who invented pasties never grow less. How could anybody prevent it? Why do shadows be sometimes long and sometimes short?'

'I very often don't understand what grown-up people mean,' replied Amanda, 'and I think Guy often means nothing at all.'

'Perhaps,' said Stephen, thoughtfully, 'but, Mannie, people's shadows *do* grow

less, and I don't see what harm it does them, or why they shouldn't. Look!' continued he, standing up, 'see what a long shadow I have got now, and when we first came out to play, I had scarcely any at all. I don't see how it is.'

'Guy said that no fellow could understand,' said Amanda, 'so perhaps we can't.'

'He laughed when he said that,' said Stephen, 'like papa does sometimes. Papa often says things, queer things, and laughs, and then, if I think *very* hard, I can find out what he means afterwards. I think papa always means something, I wonder if Guy did?'

The children had risen, and strolled across the beach, talking thus; and they now silently wandered forward to some distance, till they came within sight of the cliffs on the opposite side.

'Mannie,' said Stephen, 'do you see

that little hole in the rock there? I asked Horace one day where it went to, and he said perhaps it was the way into Aladdin's cave. You know there *is* a cave over yonder, what papa took us into once, so Horace may mean something about it; but I told him that I knew better, because Aladdin's cave had a trap-door to it, and it pulled up with a ring, and he went down steps; and then he said perhaps this was the *back*-door to the cave, and you know that *might* be, and Aladdin had never found it out.'

'Do you think it is?' asked Amanda, her eyes round with wonder.

'I'm telling you,' replied Stephen, very earnestly. 'You know I went with old Jem once, to Pentire Farm, to fetch the milk and things, and we passed that hole, and I asked him where it went to, and he said it was not fit for little boys to go into, because there was a place up there that

went right through the world and came out on the other side. If it does, it must go through hell, and, you know, some people call all this outside Hell Bay, so that must be the reason why; and I was frightened, and I cried, and asked if the devil lived there.'

'What did he say?' asked Amanda, creeping nearer to her brother, and holding his hand very tightly.

'Well, you need not be afraid, because he said there was no devil in Cornwall; he had never crossed the river and got into this land because he was so afraid of being put into a pasty and eaten up. He did not laugh like papa; he was quite, quite serious, and he said them was a passel of old wives' tales, and I must think no more of none of them. Then I asked him if it was a way into Aladdin's cave, and he said he had never heard tell of the gentleman. You see, Jem does not know very much.'

'No,' said the little girl. 'He does not speak at all like papa and people at home do, and when I asked nurse why, she said it was because folks here was only a lot of savages. I told her that they could not be savages like Robinson Crusoe's savages, because *they* were black, and wore scarcely any clothes, and then she said this was a Christian land, and them was a set of heathen blackamoors, which accounts for it.'

'Well, well,' said Stephen, impatiently, 'I haven't told you all yet. One day, before we came away from home, I was sitting for papa, and mamma came in, and said that we wanted a lot of things, and papa told her it was no use, and they must wait till the money-tree bore. I've thought and thought about it, and now I've made up my mind that the money-tree is very likely to grow near where Aladdin's jewel-trees grew, because Undine's knight, Huld-

brand, looked down into the inside of the ground, and saw the gnomes playing with heaps and heaps of gold, and I think that you and I had best go a little way up that hole and peep in. Nobody would notice us, because we are so small, and if we could only find out where the money-tree and the jewel-trees grow, we could go home and tell papa, and he and the boys could go with great sacks and carry away all they wanted.'

Stephen was little Amanda's king—she was sure to think all he proposed right, and to be ready to go where he led; so she only slipped her fat little hand into his, grasping it tightly, and set forth in undoubting confidence.

Scrambling over some loose, rough stones, up a slight height, they entered into the adit of an ancient, disused mine, where, years before, silver tin had been found, but the vein had given out. As is

often the case in Cornwall, the adit pierced the side of a hill, and the shaft of the mine was sunk at some distance from the entrance.

A stream of water now ran out through this passage, deeper in some places than others, but always shallow, and the children could make their way through it; but, as it came up to their ankles almost everywhere, they took off their shoes, and laid them at the mouth of the hole.

'You're not afraid, Mannie?' asked Stephen.

'No,' said Amanda, 'I'm not afraid.'

In the dim light, the wet rocks showed many tinted: dark, and orange-coloured, green and dusky red; and the children thought they must be coming soon to the jewels. They looked back now and then, and laughed to see how small grew the spot of light through which they had entered. Their laughter sounded

strange and hollow, not like its usual sound; it reverberated in weird fashion, and Amanda thought the gnomes repeated it, mocking them, and began to cry.

'Don't cry,' said Stephen, 'that's like a girl. *I* don't cry.'

Amanda choked her tears down, but turned once more to look back at the light; and, in turning, fell. Stephen helped her up, wet and muddy; they stumbled along for a few steps further, looked back once more—the spot of light was gone!

'Steenie, Steenie,' sobbed the little maid, now thoroughly frightened, and unaware that the passage had made a bend which hid the entrance from them. 'Steenie, Steenie, they've put the light out!'

She fell again as she spoke, for the stones were very slippery, and Stephen fell over her. Bruised, frightened, cold and wet, they now grew perfectly bewildered. They went back a few steps, and forward a few

steps, and could not remember which way they had come. The manliness of seven years still prevailed to prevent Stephen from crying, but he had to press his lips very firmly together to prevent doing so, and he held his little sister's hand tightly clenched in his. Her bravery was all gone, and she clung to him, sobbing piteously.

'Don't cry, Mannie,' said he, 'I'll take care of you.'

'Oh! take me home! take me home!' wailed the little maid.

'So I will, directly I find the way,' said he, plunging yet further towards the shaft.

Another bend in the passage, and an air-hole, pierced upwards through the hill, and concealed by the growth of shrubs above, threw a gleam of light once more upon the dripping rocks, the sullen stream, the white faces of the children. They

looked up, and saw a star above them.

'Is it night?' asked Amanda. 'There is a star.'

'I don't know,' cried Stephen, doubtfully, 'it has come very quick if it is. Perhaps it is like the star of Bethlehem, come to show us the way. Let me think,' continued he. After a pause, during which he did what he called 'thinking hard,' he spoke again. 'I think, Mannie, we had best stay here, and wait. We can see if anyone comes, and I think papa will come by-and-bye. And I think, Mannie, we had best say our prayers; you know we always have to say them at night, and then God will keep us safely till papa comes.'

'I can't remember them,' said Amanda, 'I'm so frightened.'

'Mamma said it didn't matter much what words we said, so as we speak the truth to God,' said Stephen; 'so let us say

"Please, God, take care of us and send papa," and see if He will.'

They said their simple prayer, then Stephen set his back against the rock, put both arms round his sister, and held her closely. Gradually, weariness overpowered them both, and they slipped down into a sitting posture, and fell asleep.

Surely their innocent prayer was heard, for but six feet or so beyond them yawned the shaft of the old mine—a black gulf, filled to the brim with overflowing water, spanned by a rotten windlass—where death most certainly awaited them, beyond the power of man to save.

But a few steps further, and headlong they must have fallen into that gloomy pit, into the ice-cold water. But, ignorant of their peril, the poor babies slept on, while the star looked down upon them from heaven above.

CHAPTER XII.

FOUND.

Charles Grenfell and old Jem reached the farm at Pentire, as has been said, only to meet with fresh disappointment. The children had not been seen; but all the men there, from the farmer himself down to the youngest herd-boy, joined in the search.

'I fear, sir,' said kindly farmer Wills to young Grenfell, 'I fear, sir, there is but little chance of finding them, poor little souls. They will be washed out to sea,

as likely as not. I've seen a-many wrecks on the shore hereabouts, and scarcely ever a body. The waves be so cruel strong.'

'Poor Mrs. Selby!' said the young man.

'Ay, one feels for her, poor lady. That there was a nice little chap. My missis could talk of nothing else after he'd been here. "I'll come and see you again very soon, ma'am," saith he. She tells often how pretty he spoke. "I'll come and see you again very soon, ma'am," and up he put his little face to be kissed. And to think that he'll never come no more! Ah, well!'

'I have only seen their portraits,' said Charles; 'they must have been beautiful children from those.'

'Ay, they were. The flowers of the flock, to my mind; not but what Mr. Horace is a mighty fine young man, and

Miss Selby a sweet, pretty creature, so mild and gentle. Every chield as knows her hath a good word for her.'

'What has that dog found?' cried Charles, running forward suddenly.

All hurried to the place. Ranger was pointing, but nothing was to be seen but a hole in the ground, with a bit of broken fence around it. Upon his master coming up, the dog began to whimper, and tear up the grass and earth with his feet in evident agitation.

'What is it, thou old fool?' said Jem. 'Thiccee be naught but an air-hole, just over the shaft of Wheal Pentire. There did use to be a paling round it when I wor a boy, and it should be mended up. 'Tis dangerous as it be.'

'Could the children have slipped down, think you?' asked Charles, bending to peer in.

'No one has been here, or the ground

would be broken up, sir,' said one of the men.

'There *is* a child crying down there,' Charles exclaimed. 'God in heaven save them!'

'Master Steenie! Be it thee down there? Master Steenie! Little miss!' called Jem.

No answer, but the dog tore up the grass madly.

'I will climb down,' cried Charles. 'Make way for me!'

'No, no, sir, 'ee can't. It be a kind of chimney like. 'Ed 'd slip right down a top of them, and skear them into fits, or knock them into the shaft. Better fetch lights, and go round by the adit below.'

'Run, Joe, run,' cried Mr. Wills. 'Run home and ask the missis for candles. Run for thy life, now!'

The boy rushed off, and headlong down the hill went Charles and the rest of the

men. The dog seemed to understand; it led the van, leaping and barking. Never before or since did so short a descent seem so long to Charles, but he reached the adit first.

'Send for their father, Wills,' shouted he, passing in.

'No, no, sir. Suppose it be a mistake, don't 'ee go to give the poor gentleman hope. Suppose they be dead.'

'I tell you they were sobbing,' shouted the young man, splashing into the inky blackness of the adit, without waiting for the light.

'Mr. Grenfell, Mr. Grenfell! Come back, sir! There be holes, and pitfalls, and what all, theer. Come back! Let one of us go! Lord's sake, what will Sir Theophilus say!'

Charles heeded not. No one could pass him in that narrow opening, and the passage seemed as the very gateway to Hades

in its darkness and danger. He could not advance quickly; loose stones, deep holes, jagged projections of rock impeded his path. He had matches in his pocket, and struck them one by one to light his way; but each tiny flame only showed dripping walls, streaming water, and perfect darkness before and behind him. Candles were brought, and old Jem, holding two in his shaking hand, made his stooping advance more quickly through the slippery stones and splashing mud.

'Let me go first, sir,' said he. 'Don't frighten them with a strange voice. Let me speak. My pretties, come to your ma! Don't 'ee be afeared. Here be old Jem come to fetch 'ee.'

A sickening silence ensued upon the reverberations of his voice, which sounded so ghostly and unnatural in that confined space.

They stumbled on.

'Master Steenie! Master Steenie! My pretty dears, here be old Jem!'

No answer. Charles thought of Mabel, singing in the cavern, and choked. Would the tender grace of that day never return more without thought of this dreadful event? God help that sweet young girl. Oh, might He bring comfort to her, not confirmation of sorrow!

They seemed to come to an end of the excavation; but there was a sharp turn in the passage there, beyond a great mass of dark green rock, veined with orange. What was there, lying against its further side? Not hard rock! Soft faces. Not sharp, jagged granite! Tender childhood.

There they were. Little Amanda's sweet, chubby face, pale and tear-stained, clasped on her brother's breast; while he, but a baby himself, manly enough to retain his fostering hold upon her, but too childish to keep his bravery intact through

this awful demand upon it, having cried himself to sleep, and drawing each breath with a sob, through the midst of that blessed unconsciousness; his golden curls resting against the dripping rocks, and he sitting in a pool of water.

Jem gathered him up in his arms, as Charles lifted the little girl, and they tenderly carried them out.

'Found, found! Alive, alive!' shouted men and boys. 'Hurrah! Found! All safe!'

The sounds spread far upon the still evening air, and brought a crowd running fast across the sands.

Jem put Steenie into his father's arms. Frank was speechless, but he grasped first the old man's horny hand, and then the white one of young Grenfell, with a mighty grip, as he held his treasure tightly. The mother threw her arms around her child and the young man both,

and kissed first one and then the other, as if both had been her children.

'You cannot hold her, you cannot carry her, dear madam,' said Charles, returning her embrace with a full heart. 'Let me help you both.'

He took her arm in his, and held her trembling hand firmly in his warm clasp, as he carried the child, and they proceeded together.

Mabel had tarried for a couple of warm wraps. She threw them over the shivering, bewildered children, now crying again, though half asleep; then she sped back to the house, to assist nurse and Miss Rose in preparing hot baths, blankets, food for them. She thought of nothing else at that moment.

Horace and Dorothea attended to their guests; and, presently, Mabel came down for a few minutes.

'I do not know how we can thank you,

Mr. Grenfell,' she said, offering her hand. 'Steenie has come to himself, and says that you went to fetch him out of that awful place. Papa and mamma cannot leave them, but beg me to thank you,—so very much,—in their name.'

'Your mother has thanked me in a way which I shall never forget,' said Charles, impulsively, not aware that he held her hand in his. 'You must let me take care of you, now. You are shaking from head to foot. Selby, a glass of that wine. Now, my dear Miss Selby, you must take it. Let me entreat you to swallow it. There, there, don't cry, all is well now.'

'I am sorry to be so foolish,' said Mabel, no more conscious than he that he still supported her. 'We all feel your kindness, but I cannot talk of it.'

'No, no, don't try. All is well now,' said he, pushing a chair gently towards her, and seating her on it. She sank,

weeping, into it, quite unnerved, and he stood gazing down upon her with tender solicitude in every feature.

Matthews appeared with the carriage, and Miss Courtney was ready.

'Good-bye,' she said. 'We must always be friends after going through this together. You will be better without us now.'

She kissed the girls affectionately, and allowed Horace to place her in the carriage and wrap her up.

'Good-evening, Mr. Selby,' said she, shaking hands. 'I shall never forget Polzeath.'

'Good-bye, Miss Courtney. I shall never forget your kindness to my mother,' said he.

Miss Rose came down, and the party drove away. The ladies soothed their nerves by talking over the event of the evening, dwelling upon every detail which

they had shared alike ; but Miss Courtney never mentioned Horace, and Matthews thought his young master had never been so tired before, for he sat beside him with folded arms, and spoke not a word the whole way home.

Perhaps both of the young people, whose hearts had been so stirred to the very depths, through their warm sympathies that day, felt a little chill, when, upon beginning to relate what had happened, as they sat at the dinner which had long been waiting for them, they met with small attention to their story.

Sir Theophilus and Lady Sarah had not witnessed the anxiety, and did not realize it. The old gentleman was full of the death of the miller's widow;—the Mrs. Rosewarne whose fostering care had been exercised over the earliest childhood of himself and his sister, Lady Courtney.

This woman had lived to the extreme

verge of human age, and died suddenly in her chair that afternoon. Sir Theophilus had always been fond of her, had gone to see her frequently, and provided for her with the greatest liberality.

'Poor Selby!' said he. 'It must have given him a terrible fright, but the youngsters are all safe, you say. Your mother will feel Mrs. Rosewarne's death very much, Augusta. She was ninety-two, poor, dear soul! and possessed all her faculties still. A wonderful woman! She managed all the family up to the last, with the greatest judgment, and just dropped off without a moment's warning.'

'I am very sorry to hear it, sir,' said Charles, 'but she was full of years, and it is a mercy that she did not suffer.'

'Your father is a good deal upset,' said Lady Sarah. 'But I do hope, Augusta, that you do not feel shivered at all. I advise you to take another glass of champagne, as a preventive to cold.'

Neither side was quite in sympathy with the other that evening, and all were glad to retire soon.

'I shall ride over early to see how those little beggars are,' said Charles, as he bade his cousin good-night. 'Shall I say anything from you?'

'Oh, yes! my dear love, and if I can do anything for them, they need only command me.'

'I will take your message, dear, though I don't see how anybody can do much for them. I hope all is going on well now, but I cannot put poor Mrs. Selby's white face out of my thoughts.

'Nor can I,' said Augusta.

But there were other faces yet more clear to each young person's mind's eye, of which neither spoke to the other.

CHAPTER XIII.

POOR STEENIE.

It was an anxious night at Polzeath for the whole family. The children, bathed, warmed, and fed, fell into an exhausted sleep, but their repose soon became restless, and feverish symptoms appeared.

Neither father nor mother left them. Mrs. Selby, indeed, lay down beside them, but Frank sat up through the whole night, watching. When Mabel crept to the door in the early morning, and her father opened it to her, she was startled to observe how those hours had changed him. He

seemed to have become an old man in the space of that one night, so grey and ashy did he look. Her mother had fallen into a light slumber, and Mr. Selby stepped across the threshold, drawing the door to behind him, lest their voices should awaken her.

'Papa, I have lit the kitchen fire, and got some coffee hot over it. Come down and have a little. How cold your hands are! Come, dear, we should hear the slightest sound.'

Her father let her draw him away. He had eaten nothing since the hurried dinner of the previous noon, and was exhausted. The warmth of the fire at that chilly morning hour, and the fragrance of the coffee, were grateful to him. Mabel had gathered together a slight repast from the relics of the meal which had been prepared for their festivity, and she coaxed him to partake of it.

When she had prevailed upon him to swallow enough to put fresh heart in him, she carried some up to her mother, whose sleep had not lasted long, and who needed refreshment as much as her husband by that time.

'May dear,' whispered she, as she returned the cup to the girl's hand—'May dear, I wish we were at home again. If the little dears are going to be ill, what shall we do here, and I don't like Steenie's looks at all. I fear that neither of them can escape scot-free from such exposure and cold. They were wet through and through, and chilled to the bone.'

The eldest daughter in such a large family could not but have gathered some experience as to illness, even had it not been for the last year's training in it. She knew that Steenie was delicate, and that he had never properly recovered from the scarlet fever. She stepped round the

bed, and gently felt their hands and heads.

'Mannie has a nice moisture on her skin, mamma,' said she, 'though she is very hot. But she must be hot so wrapped up in this blanket. Aunt Rose promised to send the doctor from Withiel over the first thing this morning. Mr. Grenfell said they would stop at his door as they drove through the village. He said that Lady Sarah considered him skilful as a general practitioner.'

'It was well thought of,' said Mrs. Selby, with evident relief. 'Where is your father, dear?'

'In the kitchen, before the fire. I got the large arm-chair in there, and he has had some breakfast. I hope that he may have dropped asleep, for he knows that I am with you. Now, mamma dear, you go into my bed, while I will call nurse to sit with me and look after the children. You

ought to have a good rest. What should we do if you were to be ill here?'

'Perhaps you are right, my love. I have a terrible headache. It may pass off if I could have a sound sleep.'

Mabel saw her mother undressed, and comfortably laid down. She administered some soothing drops to her, set the window open to the sweet early morning air, and the lullaby of the waves breaking gently from the soft mists upon the sunny beach. Then she fetched nurse, and peeped at her father, who had in fact yielded to her gentle wiles, and, with his feet outstretched upon a second chair, had sank back upon the cushions of that in which he sat, and fallen asleep in the glow of the fire.

She mended the fire softly, carried up some coffee to nurse, and shared an early breakfast with her as they took the watch. All was so still, so peaceful, so calm after the excitement,—the horrible anxiety,—

that the sense of repose was exquisitely delicious to the thoughtful girl. Nurse dozed by the bedside, and she sat looking out upon the sea.

Mist hung like a veil over its heaving expanse, preluding a hot day. Sea-birds fed upon the moist sands whence the waves were now retreating, for it was seven o'clock; but all was still in the house, everyone being tired, and it was better to let them rest.

Suddenly, in the stillness, was heard the distant beat of horse's hoofs. It could not be the doctor, come already? The sound was that of a rider, not of a farm horse plodding heavily to work. The little ones were in a deep sleep, nurse breathing heavily with slumber. Mabel stole from the room, and went down to the door.

As she set it open, noiselessly, she was startled to see no elderly surgeon such as she expected, but the figure of Mr. Charles

Grenfell. He had dismounted, held the bridle of his horse over his arm, and stood, flushed, handsome, smiling, yet a little abashed before her. She was as unexpected a sight to him as he to her, and he stammered out his greeting with a mixture of sensations that he did not attempt to analyse.

'Mr. Grenfell!' cried May. 'Is there anything amiss?'

'No, no, Miss Selby. Nothing at all. Only,—I thought,—it seemed to me,—I considered—that your aunt would be glad to hear, the first thing, that none of you are any worse for your alarm last night.'

'It is very kind of you,' said May, astounded at the idea that he had ridden ten miles at that early hour, simply to enquire for them, and turning over in her own mind what she could do with him. Not a servant nor another creature but herself awake or presentable;—not a

place where she could ask him in to rest!

'It is very kind of you, but you do not mean to say that you have ridden from Tregarthen so early, on purpose!'

'Oh! I very often take an early ride. That is nothing, I shall be at home to breakfast.'

'I am so sorry,' hesitated she. 'Papa and mamma have been up all night with the children, and are now asleep. We were all late, and nobody is down-stairs yet. Will you walk in, and I will call papa?'

'By no means. I did not come to give you any trouble, only to ask how the little children are, and your mother—Indeed, I should be glad to assure your aunt that none of you are any the worse.'

'I fear that the children must be ill after their wetting and chill. They have not long recovered from scarlet fever, and my little brother has always been delicate. They have been very feverish through the

night, and are now asleep. Were you kind enough to ask the doctor to come over this morning?'

'We did call, and he will be here as early as possible, but I will see him again as I return. I am so sorry, Miss Selby. I trust that there may not be much amiss. Is there anything which my mother can do?'

'No, thank you. Indeed, we are so crowded in this house, that there is no room for kind helpers. But I hope that there is not much wrong. Children pull through such things wonderfully very often.'

'And what a charming afternoon you gave us yesterday, Miss Selby. I never enjoyed anything half so much, and my cousin is so delighted with your clever sister, and was so enchanted with your *fête*. She desires me to give you her love.'

'I am very glad to hear you were pleased. Dora has quite an artist's nature,'

said Mabel gratified, yet hearing sounds behind her which made her wish he would go, so that she might be free to mount guard again.

Perhaps he noticed the uneasiness in her eyes, for he held out his hand.

'I will not detain you now. I am sure that you must want to be rid of me, but I may come again, may I not? I shall drive Augusta over as soon as I know that the little ones are better.'

May could hardly respond properly. She was debating whether she ought to offer him any refreshment, conscious that all the coffee which she had prepared had been drunk up; that her father must be disturbed if she went into the kitchen to boil more; that there was not a drop more milk to be had until old Jem arrived with the morning's supply; and that there was no one to do the work but herself.

'Good-bye,' said she, in desperation, 'it

is very kind of you to come over in this way.'

'I could do no less,' replied he, mounting his horse, and waving his hand in farewell.

It was her father whom Mabel had heard moving. He stood before the fire where the embers had sunk down to a mere handful, and was yawning in a portentous manner.

'Oh! It is you, my dear, is it? I thought I heard voices. Has the doctor come already?'

'No, papa, it was Mr. Grenfell, who had ridden over to enquire!'

'Mr. Grenfell! Where is he?'

'Gone again.'

Frank laughed.

'So that is the way you treat your young men, is it! Expect them to ride twenty miles before breakfast, and never ask them over the threshold, or give them bite or sup! May, I am ashamed of you!'

'Papa!' cried poor May, almost ready to cry. 'What could I have done? Where could I have put him?'

But Frank only laughed the more at her. He was refreshed by his repast and his sleep, his natural light-heartedness was ready to re-assert itself once more.

'Well!' he said. 'I think I shall go and have a bathe. Call Horace and the boys, my dear, they may as well come too, and, while we are gone, you can see whether you can find breakfast for anyone. Your mother gone to bed? That is well. And the little ones asleep? Good heavens, Mabel! What a fright those plaguey little brats gave us!'

Mabel was glad to see the group of men and boys go off with their towels, for there was so much to be done. Baby was crying, she heard Amanda's voice with a wail in it, and Steenie's extremely hoarse.

She made up the fire, and set water on

to boil before their one servant appeared. Her sisters were getting up, tired and a little cross. Dorothea was never of much use in housework, she hated the drudgery, and her head was always filled with other matters. Felicia was her shadow, and Eva too young to be of material assistance; but, among them all, some order was evolved out of the chaos in the parlour, and the breakfast-table set while Mabel went up to the children, and nurse dressed the baby.

Mrs. Selby's headache was severe, she could not rise; the children were very unwell, particularly Steenie, who was in high fever, and May was extremely uneasy about him.

All her fears were justified when the doctor arrived. Amanda was in the first stage of a violent inflammatory cold, her throat much affected. Careful nursing would, however, in all probability, save her from a serious illness; but Stephen

was threatened with rheumatic fever, and his symptoms were very grave. The time of year was in his favour, and he was in excellent fresh air, they must hope for the best; but that he had recovered so recently from scarlet-fever was unfortunate, as also that, in this house, only intended for a month or two of sea-side frolic and bathing for persons in fair health, there were no appliances for invalids or severe illness.

It was impossible, however, to move the child, they must do as well as they could.

Mrs. Selby, well practised in nursing, fertile in resource, made the most of such material as she possessed, and settled down to fight with the disease bravely.

It needed all her skill, all her courage, all her endurance. Racked with pain, wasted by fever, the poor child's sufferings were heartrending to behold. Day and night his feeble moan rang through and through their ears; step by step were they

beaten back in their struggles to reduce the disorder; nearer and nearer the verge of the grave came the little fellow; yet still the mother's eyes were tearless, her spirit still high to combat.

Not so the father. Poor tender-hearted Frank could not bear to witness the little boy's pain; he would not leave him, he could not touch him; he was hopeless from the first, nor could he string himself up to enforce the remedies which seemed to be such torture; he broke down time after time into pitiful grief, and was upon his wife's hands almost as much as the child was.

Nurse was skilful and experienced, and Mabel now graduated in woman's hardest tasks; her mother sighed out many a time, 'What should I do without you, May dear!'

Amanda was very unwell for several days, then took a sudden turn, and re-

covered fast. The baby had been thriving in the sea-air ever since she had been brought to Polzeath, and gave but little trouble; and at last Steenie's fever began to abate, the rheumatism to lessen, and the chance for his life to increase day by day.

After the first day or two, help also came from Withiel. As soon as the Miss Selbys understood the state of things at Polzeath, they were eager to help. They took the twin boys to their cottage, and the two younger girls, but had no room for more. Still this clearance was of great use, and presently help came also from Tregarthen.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE SHADOW OF A DARK WING.

Whilst the young people had been at Polzeath on that eventful day, Lady Sarah had sat alone, gazing wistfully out of her window over the wide expanse of park and country which stretched before her.

She sat in her own private sitting-room, opening from her own particular suite of rooms, fitted up with every daintiness and comfort which the heart of woman could desire. The walls were hung with chintz, of a delicate blue tone of colour, which threw up the rich carving of the oak

étageres and brackets that held such a wealth of lovely china. Carved oak, in bordered shelves and twisted pillared supports, surrounded the fire-place, and rose to the very ceiling, laden with exquisite Dresden figures; Sèvres vases; Chelsea ruralities, of creamy hue, Spring, Summer, Autumn, and Winter, for ever offering baskets of suitable emblems; and blue Wedgwood ware covered with Flaxman's designs in transparent white. There was no fire now in the grate; lovely flowers filled it instead with glowing cheerfulness; and a profusion of flowers filled the balcony upon which glass doors were set wide open, letting in the summer air that gently swelled the curtains of blue silk and white lace.

A few choice water-coloured pictures were there, but not many books, for Lady Sarah was no great reader. A little of the fashionable light literature of the day

satisfied her cravings in that line. What had she to read for?

What reason had she for doing anything, indeed? It was better to pay others for doing even any fancy work for which she wished, than to do it herself; for there were poor ladies to whom such employment meant bread. Why take it from their mouths?

She loved old china, but she possessed so much that she seldom found any specimen worthy of being added to her collection.

She was fond of pictures, but did not draw. She could not satisfy her own fastidious taste in that line;—it was easier to buy, from the wall of exhibitions, much better ones than she could ever paint.

She was no musician. She was charitable, but charity yielded her no occupation. What the poor needed were blankets, shoes, food in hard times, kitchen

physic in sickness. Public charities wanted money; handsome subscriptions, for distribution by those who understood the matter, were better to give than intermeddling with what she did not comprehend.

She had no particular pleasure in the luxury that surrounded her, for Lady Sarah's was not a vulgar mind. Dress, display, fineries, show, possessed no great charms to her; she had always been able to have what was suitable and proper for every occasion, and cared for no more. She had never been obliged to wait, save, make sacrifices, struggle, for anything whatever which she desired, therefore she could not estimate the value of her comforts and refinements.

But what her heart craved for was that which no money could buy, no position secure for her; and Lady Sarah was a disappointed, discontented woman, in the

midst of all that to many a woman, leading a life of terrible deprivation, though with tastes for refinement and culture, would have seemed such bliss.

She wanted her beloved son to take a place in the eyes of the world; to distinguish himself; to be talked of, admired, looked up to, considered; to be one of the leading men in the country; and no ambition could be stirred up in the young man's soul.

Had Lady Sarah but known it, possible stimulus lay easily at her hand.

How many a hard-working man and woman, of gentle birth and breeding, yet sadly slender purse, would have blessed her for an invitation to spend a short spring or summer holiday in that lovely place. Men and women whose writings were eagerly welcomed as influences by all classes; whose teachings were most valuable; whose preachings were a

guidance; but who had not yet reaped the reward for their work, and perhaps never would.

The wives of such men are bravely struggling in secret, with unlovely details of cooking, cleaning, sewing; passing lives devoid of all the ease and beauty which they could so greatly appreciate, for the sake of the love they bear to husband or child.

The society of such women could only have been an honour to her ladyship, might she win their friendship. They and theirs might have brought examples before the eyes of her lotus-eating boy that would have spurred him to work for very shame.

Standing upon a great London railway-station, on the Saturday morning before an August bank-holiday, many a lesson may be read of the working lives among cultured people to whom a day's breathing

space in the country is a rare delight from simple need of money to gratify it.

Here may be seen the young husband and wife, going off together to fish. They have bought some humble wherewithal *en route* to the station, and are arranging it, with glee, as they await the train. The girl's thick boots are patched; her gloves mended; the volume of poetry sticking half out of her jacket pocket is well worn; but her voice is that of a lady, both of their faces show the unmistakable signs of gentle birth; both are young enough to enjoy life.

'Mary,' whispers the young man, suddenly, in some dismay, 'did you remember to bring the luncheon?'

With what girlish triumph she lifts a basket into sight! It has been tucked in ambush beneath the bench on which they sit.

'Cold ham and salad!' cries she.

'Scones and jam! We shall need to buy nothing but your glass of ale, either day!'

'What a little woman it is!' says he, admiringly. 'She never forgets anything!'

A little further off is a group of young lady teachers, friends.

'Where is Nelly?' cries one.

Up comes Nelly, radiant, flourishing the current number of the *Idler*.

'What did possess you to buy *that*,' cry her companions, in disgust.

'I'm going to be idle for three whole days,' cries Nelly, exultingly. 'What could I buy better!'

Peals of merriment resound from the girls to whom idleness is such a treat in their hard-working lives.

People like this, toiling in shabby lodgings, wearing unfashionable dress, living upon homely, often untempting food, are

yet furnishing the novels, children's books, magazine articles deemed worthy to amuse the leisure hours of wealthier people; they are quite fit to educate their boys and girls; to be patronized when they have made their names known to all England; they, some, many of them, might have been valuable assistants to this great lady in her need of help; but she had no acquaintance with 'persons of that class.' They were out of her sphere, out of her reach. Perhaps all the better for them.

Lady Sarah had made a venture in this direction by engaging Mr. Jackson as tutor for Charles, and it had not succeeded.

She knew that the youngsters did not take to each other;—that Mr. Jackson had no influence over Charles, yet could not understand why. The tutor, if one of 'that sort of person,' was quite gentlemanly, and very well behaved. But, oh dear! how fatal it is to real liking of a man when

such praise is his first and strongest recommendation!

Would Augusta rouse her cousin up to work? Did she desire that she should be the one to do so?

Augusta was much more elegant, much prettier than she expected. She was cultured, enthusiastic, interested in many things, even eager about books and pictures; but—but—what was it which was not to Lady Sarah's taste?

She could not define it herself. It could not, surely, be a certain lack of commonsense, but it was something like it. Charlie seemed more inclined to smile indulgently at her than to be influenced towards greater earnestness by her. He was very fond of her, evidently, but played with her more than agreed with any serious feeling.

So her ladyship sat, chafing in spirit;—eating her heart out, without satisfying

her hunger, or knowing where to turn for more wholesome food.

Sir Theophilus came in.

'Will you give me a cup of tea with you this afternoon, Sarah?' asked he. 'I have had quite a shock.'

'What is the matter?' asked she anxiously, looking at his troubled face.

'Well, nothing that touches us at home, my dear. But I called in to see my old nurse, Mrs. Rosewarne, and found that she had just been struck with apoplexy. She died while I was there.'

'I am very sorry, my love,' said Lady Sarah. 'Tea directly,' said she to the man who answered her summons. 'She was an old woman,' turning back to her husband, soothingly.

'Yes, a very old woman. She could not have lived much longer, but it is hard to part with old friends. She was like a mother to Diana and myself for many

years. We have always been fond of her.'

'She has a son, has she not? Why did he not succeed his father in the mill, and look after her in her old age?'

'My father did not like him. He advised me not to encourage his settling here; and, I do not know why, I have always had a prejudice against the fellow myself.'

'But he has that public-house close to us in town, has he not?'

'Yes, that house does not belong to me, he rents it from some city firm of lawyers who act for a minor. The property is held in trust, and cannot be sold until the owner comes of age. I do not like Rosewarne being so mixed up with our men, but his house is well conducted; he gives me no handle against him; yet I do not like the man, it vexes me to brush against him so often if I visit the stables. There is

an insolence about him which annoys me greatly. It is one among other reasons which causes me to dislike our town house.'

'Is this more than mere prejudice, Sir Theophilus? Are you not rather hard on the man? I have seen him, and his manner was perfectly respectful.'

'Why, my dear, it is not exactly mere prejudice, yet I do not know what else to call it. Last year, when Gill died, the mill and farm had to be relet, and Rosewarne made a high bid for it. I decided that my good father would never have said to me what he did without reason, and I acted accordingly, accepting a lower offer. Rosewarne, of course, said nothing to me, but he was very much put out. He expressed himself violently in the hearing of my agent, and said that he could make the old fool—meaning me—repent of it. Lane asked me if I knew of any hold which the

fellow could suppose he held over me, to justify such language, but I am not aware of any.'

'Do you know what caused your father's dislike, or have you any idea as to what occasioned it?'

'I fancy that it arose in connection with an unfortunate love affair of my eldest brother, poor Charles, with a very pretty and very giddy sister of his. Charles was headstrong about it, and about his attachment to her brother, and our father had grave reasons for disapproval of the whole affair. Something displeased him particularly after poor Charles's death, but he never explained to me what it was. I was but a child at the time, and James was alive then. When he spoke to me about it, he was very ill, and could not talk much. The old woman, I believe, behaved very well about it, and kept Rosewarne in check. My father never withdrew his

protection from her, but Diana and I were removed from her care at that time. She often visited us in the nursery however, afterwards.'

'This is all an old story,' said Lady Sarah. 'If nothing has come of it during so many years, it is hardly likely that anything will now. Do not be nervous. You are upset by the poor old body dying in that way while you were with her. I am very sorry that you should have been there.'

She did her best to turn her husband's thoughts, but without much success. A presentiment of evil seemed to have cast a darksome wing over him; and there never had been the close intercommunity of heart and soul between them that enabled Mrs. Selby to be such comfort in trouble to Frank. She did not possess the same tenderness of nature.

She felt her powerlessness, and the effort

was a task to her, not a labour of love. It oppressed and wearied her extremely, nor did she see any adequate cause for so much depression. It was only a worthy old servant of the family who had died. What was there in that to upset Sir Theophilus so much?

When the party returned from Polzeath, she was quite exhausted by her efforts, and a little cross because dinner had been kept waiting so long.

CHAPTER XV.

THE PICNIC AT BEDRUTHAN.

Lady Sarah was anxious to find suitable companionship for her niece, and to keep her cheerfully amused during her visit; but many difficulties had arisen, for almost all her acquaintances, within easy reach, were in town for the season; and, among such families as were still in the country, few young people were to be found.

There would be plenty when the shooting began in September, but this was such a dead time of the year.

'Miss Courtney has never seen Bed-

ruthan,' Rose Selby had said a week previously. 'Do you not think that she would enjoy a little picnic there? The tides will be just right for seeing the caverns at Porth, too, in a few days.'

'Yes,' said Lady Sarah, doubtfully. 'It is a long way, but Augusta is quite strong enough for that. The question is, who could be asked to go with her?'

Several families were suggested, but none seemed to be suitable when discussed.

'The Carthuans!' cried Miss Rose. 'Is it not a long time since you have shown them any attention? The girls are very well brought up,—nice lady-like girls,—we could take them up on our way. The two Miss Carthuans, Miss Courtney and I would fill the barouche. Mr. Jackson and Mr. Grenfell could ride, or Mr. Jackson go on the box. I believe he does not care about riding.'

'Yes, that might do,' said Lady Sarah. 'Do write for me, my dear Rose, and ask Mr. and Mrs. Carthuan to dine here, and take the girls home at night. We might have Dr. Cole to meet them. Mr. Carthuan would enjoy an archæological chat with the doctor. He wants to restore his church, and the doctor is such an authority upon church architecture, you know.'

'This makes eleven,' said Miss Rose, counting upon her fingers. 'You could take one gentleman more, to make the places at table even.'

'Mr. Grant?' proposed her ladyship, with slight hesitation. 'Would he come, do you think? Poor Mrs. Grant has not been dead twelve months yet.'

'He dined with the rector a week or two ago,' said Miss Rose. 'I believe that he was glad to be asked, as he feels his loneliness so terribly. He brought his little girl one day, and took tea with us. We were so sorry for him.'

'Well, ask him, he can but refuse if he does not like to visit yet,' said Lady Sarah. 'I wish the rector were at home, he would have suited better with Mr. Carthuan and Dr. Cole. I do not think Mr. Grant cares at all about ancient churches.'

All the invitations were accepted; everything in train. The carriage was to leave Tregarthen at twelve; it was to be a waggonette, not the barouche, for Lady Sarah thought that the two young men had better go in company with the ladies, to amuse them upon the long drive.

The day was perfection; the carriage stood at the door; the ladies had breakfasted, and were putting on their hats; servants were bringing out hampers, wraps, cushions; all were ready;—but where was Charles?

He had not yet made his appearance, and no one knew where he was.

'Mr. Grenfell rode out early, my lady,' said his man. 'I cannot say where.'

'Let breakfast be kept hot for him,' said his mother. 'How tiresome of him to play us such a trick to-day. Do you know where he went, Mr. Jackson?'

No, Mr. Jackson knew no more than the rest.

'It is really too bad of him,' exclaimed his mother, fretfully. 'This delay will spoil the whole day.'

'Mr. Grenfell is now riding down the avenue, my lady,' said the butler.

'Mr. Jackson,' said Lady Sarah, 'will you kindly hurry him to get ready. You really ought to start almost at once. The Miss Carthuans will think that you are not coming at all, and he has had no breakfast.'

Up came the delinquent, not at all fully impressed with the sense of his iniquities.

'What! Ready for a start? Really I did not know I was so late. The morning

was so lovely that I rode home slowly. I'm as hungry as a hunter. Purvis! Is there any breakfast for me? Mother! I *must* satisfy the pangs of hunger first, but I won't be long.'

'Where have you been, Charles?'

'To Polzeath.'

'Polzeath! This morning! What possessed you to go off there, when you knew that there was the picnic to Bedruthan to-day!'

'Well, I thought Miss Rose would be glad to know that her little niece and nephew were none the worse for their escapade last night. I am sorry to say that they do not appear to have come off scot free, Miss Rose. Your eldest niece did not give a very good account of them.'

'Charles! Don't stop to talk now! Here are the cutlets, you can tell Miss Rose all about it as you go along. Do make haste.'

Charles shrugged his shoulders, and devoted himself to his breakfast. His mother worried him. He choked down an insufficient meal, scalded his throat by trying to swallow tea too hot for him, rushed up to his room to change his clothes against time; his man had put out for him the wrong suit; there was no time to make any alteration. He kicked off his riding boots, dragged on those prepared for him, knew that they were too tight for comfort; and ran down again, feeling as if everything were *à tort et à travers.*

It was not a successful party. The day was very hot; Augusta was languid, Miss Rose tired after yesterday's excursion, and anxious about the state of things in her brother's family. Charles was decidedly cross; Mr. Jackson wanted to have been left at home for his private studies. Under no circumstances would he have been the man to help a picnic to go off

well, neither were the Miss Carthuans the right sort of girls. They were very much afraid of Miss Courtney; wished to appear to advantage, but did not know how, and they bored her inexpressibly.

'Do you sing?' asked she of the eldest Miss Carthuan.

'Yes, a little,' was the reply. 'I dote on music. Mamma says I am never happy away from the piano.'

'Yes?' drawled Miss Courtney, uninterested in this fact.

'Will you sing something for us here?' asked Miss Rose, finding the conversation drag.

'I have no music with me,' said the young lady.

'Let us have something that needs no music,' cried Charles, making a desperate effort. 'Let us sing the "Three Blind Mice." Come, Miss Rose, begin.'

Miss Rose complied, good-naturedly, in

her cracked thin voice, which had once been sweet. It was quite drowned by the stentorian tones in which Charles followed suit, but the Miss Carthuans laughed so much at 'Mr. Grenfell's drollery,' that they could not sing at all. The catch fell to the ground, and Charles felt like a fool for having proposed it.

Dead silence ensued. Miss Rose had a strong sense of responsibility upon her, and tried to introduce conversation.

'Does not this beautiful expanse of sea make one remember Byron's fine lines :—

"Roll on, thou deep, dark blue ocean, roll."'

'I never read any of Byron's poems,' said the second Miss Carthuan. 'Mamma says they are not proper for young girls.'

Augusta's lips curled, in a manner which her cousin understood; and he hastened to forestall what might be coming next.

'Have you read "Adam and Eve"?'

asked he. 'Is not Cornish scenery admirably described in that story?'

'I don't know it,' was the answer. 'Papa does not approve of novels.'

'Oh! yes; he lets us read historical ones, sometimes,' cried the other sister. 'Perhaps he would let us read that if Mr. Grenfell recommended it. Is it a pretty tale, Mr. Grenfell? Is it founded on Scripture history?'

Charles roared with laughter; even Miss Courtney smiled,—contemptuously.

'I was not aware that the Adam and Eve of Scripture lived in Cornwall,' said she, with a faint sneer.

Miss Carthuan looked puzzled and uncomprehending.

'What do you read chiefly?' asked Charles, willing to follow the young ladies' clue if they could not follow his.

'We read history,' was the reply. 'We

are reading Macaulay's History of England aloud now.'

'Oh!' said Charles.

Miss Rose understood her company better than the young people did.

'How are you getting on with the work for your bazaar?' asked she.

'Oh! we have such lovely things sent down from our cousin in London!' cried the girls. 'They are made of coloured paper, and cost so little to make, and are so very effective. I should like you to see them. There are lamp-shades, wreathed with paper flowers; and the sweetest little owls you ever saw; and a cardboard doll with six changes of dress, all in paper! I would so like to show them to you, Miss Courtney!'

Miss Carthuan warmed up at last into enthusiasm; but it was now Augusta's turn to be unresponsive. She would not talk about paper-dolls' frocks.

'Yes,' drawled she, in her most affected voice.

Charles yawned. Mr. Jackson looked severely at him.

'These bazaars,' quoth the voice of wisdom, 'may be made vast engines for good. They bring things of brightness and beauty into the unlovely homes of the poor, who could never afford more costly adornments. Even a cottager, a day labourer's wife, could afford to purchase a little coloured paper, did she but know how to use such a thing to advantage.'

'Our Withiel folks all know that already,' said Charles, laughing. 'Our butcher is a man of taste, he sticks paper flags into all the joints in his shop at Christmas, and has red and yellow tissue paper Jacob's ladders, festooning the whole place.'

'Just fancy poor old Betty Rogers,

sitting down to make fly-catchers,' said Miss Rose.

'Betty Rogers has a feeling for high art,' said Charles. 'She got half-a-crown out of me a little while ago, and had her photo taken. She told me all about it. "I've been and gone and had my image took, Master Charles," said she. "Cry gemini! It were a beautiful image, too. The chield tooked me a-seated on a sofy-seat like any lady, with my hands afore me, and my best brooch stuck in to front of me. Thiccee one with my poor dear man's face on it, as like him as he can stare. Beatrice Jane, she made me up a clane cap, and lent me a fine collar, and there I be, smiling, as happy as a grig. Oh! it were a lovely image. I gived it to my son, and says he, 'Mawther! there be ne'er a chield in Withiel would ha' knowed this for you!' He were pleased, he were."'

Miss Rose laughed, Augusta smiled, Mr. Jackson looked solemn, and Miss Carthuan cried,

'Oh, Mr. Grenfell! how funny you are!'

But the conversation languished again after this, though Mr. Jackson rather impressed the eldest Miss Carthuan with an appreciation of his good sense. After lunch, she strolled about the beach with him, discussing the welfare of the poor. He laid down the law on the subject of social science; while she listened admiringly.

Charles and Augusta walked off together, and talked over the Selby family to their hearts' content; while Miss Rose entertained the younger Miss Carthuan over bazaar matters, and promised to undertake a dairy stall at it, in Welsh costume.

None of them were sorry when the

waggonette was ready for their return. Miss Courtney wrapped herself up in a large shawl, and closed her eyes; while Charles yawned portentously, and poor Miss Rose, more tired than any, laboured hard to keep up the ball of conversation.

Things went on better after all were strengthened by their dinner.

Mrs. Carthuan had brought her daughters' music, and they sang rather feeble duets, while Mr. Jackson turned over the leaves for them; and Charles did the civil in applauding.

Miss Courtney dreamed over a book of engravings; the elder gentlemen were deep in politics and church architecture; and Mr. Grant took a seat near Lady Sarah and Miss Rose.

'My little girl has to thank you for a very pleasant afternoon last week, Miss Selby,' said he. 'Poor little woman, she has few pleasures now;' and he sighed.

'I am sure that my sisters and myself were delighted to amuse her,' said Miss Rose, slightly colouring. 'She is a very sweet child.'

'Is she not!' said the bereaved man. 'She is so like my poor dear late wife, Lady Sarah. But she is in sad need of a lady's care. A motherless little girl is a terrible charge upon a father.'

Miss Rose looked compassionate.

'But why,' thought Lady Sarah, 'need she colour up so?'

In another instant a new idea flashed upon her mind.

'Good heavens!' said she to herself. 'Good heavens! Are there ever such fools as old fools!' After another short space for reflection, she added, mentally, 'But it would not be, in any way, unsuitable either, and a very good thing for dear Rose. The man is no great fool after all. Rose would make a very good

step-mother to the child. She must be younger than he is, and is still a very pretty woman.'

Every woman is a match-maker at heart. Lady Sarah was quite pleased with the notion before the evening was over, and determined to do all in her power to further it. She became almost excited about it.

CHAPTER XVI.

TROUBLE AMONG THE SELBYS.

As the last carriage drove away, Charles heaved a sigh of relief.

'Mother dear, I do hope you will never inflict so many hours of those dreary girls upon us again.'

'My dear, they appear to be very well brought up, and perfectly lady-like.'

'Oh, yes, perfectly lady-*like*. Give me the real thing, not its faint shadow, for pity's sake. Give me the real lady in grain, in spirit, in divine essence, who never needs to be *brought up* to *look* like one.'

'Foolish boy! These are some of your paradoxes. How did our poor young friends manage to offend you? How did you like them, Mr. Jackson?

'They appear to me to be most amiable young ladies, Lady Sarah; and the elder of them to be imbued with a very earnest desire to assist in ameliorating the condition of the working classes.'

Charles made a queer grimace.

'They have it in their power to begin, then. It is a pity we did not take them to Polzeath instead of Bedruthan. Miss Dorothea Selby informed me that your brother and all the family, Miss Rose, were hard-working people.'

'I am afraid that my nieces have caught the habit of talking much nonsense from their father,' replied Miss Rose, a little annoyed. 'My brother is rather fond of making extraordinary statements; at times, not in strict accordance with truth.'

Augusta perceived the annoyance, and hastened to smooth it away.

'My cousin is only in joke, my dear Miss Selby. We were both delighted with those charming girls, and the extremely pleasant visit we had there. I wish, Aunt Sarah, that you had been with us, I have seldom enjoyed a visit more. Did you not feel the same, Charlie?'

'I did. Your nieces, Miss Rose, did not get behind the door when charming manners were being served out.'

'I am glad you liked them, poor girls. Lady Sarah, I am rather tired, I will wish you good-night.'

She retired, but the others did not feel inclined to move quite so soon from the comfortable chairs in which they were resting around a cheerful wood-fire which had been lighted in the evening. Rain was falling, and it had become rather chilly.

Sir Theophilus had gone to his own room, and Mr. Jackson beat a retreat as soon as he decently could. The cousins and Lady Sarah sat cosily together, inclined for chat.

'Really, aunt,' said Augusta, 'I do wish you had been with us yesterday. You would not be surprised that we felt the difference between those common-place girls and the Miss Selbys.'

'The Miss Selbys are all there, I can tell you,' said Charles. 'But Bessie Carthuan seems to have developed some affinity with Jackson. It would be fun to shut him up with that original Miss Dorothea, would it not, Augusta? She would give it hot to him and his social science.'

'My dear Charles, you talk more slang than is quite to my taste,' remonstrated Lady Sarah. 'Where do you pick it all up?'

'It is a safety-valve for your son, my

beloved mother, after his tutor's extreme propriety of diction. It strikes a wholesome balance. But to return to our young lady friends.'

'It is hardly fair to compare Mr. Frank Selby's daughters with Bessie and Alice Carthuan. They have been so differently brought up. Artists, and persons of that class, are generally agreeable conversationalists. It is part of their trade.'

'It ought to be part of every girl's trade to make herself pleasant,' said Charles.

'I really would like you to see those Miss Selbys, aunt,' said Augusta. 'I think you would like them as much as we do. I hope to see more of them—a great deal more.'

'Well, my dear, I will invite them over to spend a day. It will only be a proper attention to dear Rose Selby, who seems to have done her best to entertain you yesterday.'

'And succeeded,' murmured Charles.

A note was sent from Polzeath to Miss Selby next morning, and forwarded to Miss Rose immediately, with a few lines from her sister.

Frank gave a piteous account of the children.

'They are both in the utmost danger,' he wrote. 'The doctor thinks that Amy will pull through, but gives us little hope of my poor little boy. I am afraid that my wife will be much thrown back by the necessary attendance upon him, though old nurse and May help considerably. Can you help to reduce the crowd of us, like a kind, good sister? Otherwise, I must go back to town with all who can leave; but our house is in the hands of workmen during our absence, and I cannot bear to leave poor Mabel at present. Our trouble is very great.'

'Of course,' wrote Miss Selby, 'of course

we will take away all the children that our cottage will accommodate. If you, my dear Rose, are staying on at the Hall, we could have the two middle girls as well as the twin boys. Please let me know at once, and ask dear Lady Sarah whether she could kindly lend me the waggonette to fetch them this morning? I could go for them myself if she would be so good.'

Miss Rose carried the letters to Lady Sarah, with whom she found Augusta and Charles.

'Certainly, Elizabeth shall have the waggonette,' said she.

'I will drive it myself,' exclaimed Charles.

'Oh, aunt,' cried Miss Courtney, 'may I have Dorothea to stay here? I would so like it!'

'If her mother will spare her, I can have no objection,' said Lady Sarah. 'I will write a little note to invite her.'

'Thank you very much,' said Miss Rose, earnestly.

Lady Sarah, thoroughly hospitable and eager to please her niece, was glad of the chance to procure for her a companion whom she liked. The invitation was sent, and Charles drove off to fetch the party; but Lady Sarah was considerably startled, upon her son's return, to find him accompanied, not only by a shy girl of sixteen, but by a remarkably handsome young man.

'Mr. Horace Selby, mother,' said Charles, introducing him. 'I have persuaded him at least to spend the day here. He will not agree to remain, though I tell him that it would be the greatest kindness to me if he will do so, because he is reading for the same exam. as Jackson is, and we might work all together.'

'If Mr. Horace Selby will do my son the favour,' said Lady Sarah, much pre-

possessed by the young man's looks, 'it would make us very happy. While his little brother and sister are so ill, I am sure that his parents can spare him. This naughty boy of mine, Mr. Selby, is not reading as hard as we could wish. If you could induce him to do so, it would really be a kindness.'

She put out her hand to Horace, with all the kindly grace of which she was complete mistress, and he could only bow and accept the invitation.

'It is ever so good of you, mother,' said Charles to her, returning to kiss her as soon as he had shown Horace to his room. 'I thought you would not mind my bringing him here, though he was very scrupulous about coming without an invitation from you. But you can have no idea of the trouble down in that house, or of the imminent danger those children are in. Such sweet little things too. It would be

perfect cruelty to make any of the family return to town till they know whether they are to live or die.'

'My dear boy, ask whom you choose to the house at any time. I am only too glad to please you. That is a very pleasing young man in appearance, but don't let him make you more idle. I will put it all right with Mr. Jackson, if he will undertake another pupil; but don't let him waste the advantage which Jackson's tutorship may be to him.'

'No, I won't indeed, mother,' said Charles, earnestly. 'I will work like a Trojan, and make him do so too.'

It was not often that Charles was so openly affectionate to his mother, and she was touched by it.

'Perhaps,' thought she, 'here is the very inducement to study for which I have been longing. How fortunate should it prove to be so!'

So Lady Sarah was gracious beyond her wont; she was very kind to Dorothea, she made herself charming to Horace, she furthered the intimacy all the more as she perceived also the thing she wanted in the girl, who quite took Augusta off her hands.

Dorothea possessed more of her father's character and artistic nature than any of the elder ones in his family; but, in her, his geniality and easiness of disposition were replaced by a strong vein of practical common-sense, which enabled her to estimate clearly where her best chances lay, and to take advantage of them to the fullest extent.

She knew that she might paint flowers and fruit in water-colours *well*, and this she meant to do. She enjoyed the beauties of the picture-gallery extremely, but was not for one moment led away by any desire to copy or emulate what was beyond her powers, or useless to her, how-

ever beautiful it might be. She studied effects of light and shade, combinations of colour, manipulation of touch. She worked at drawing, freehand and otherwise; she hunted out books upon art in the library, and her remarks opened a new world to Augusta. For the first time she began to look upon art as a science, not a taste—to regard its mysteries as a study to be mastered and understood, instead of being simply enjoyed in a dilettante fashion. The two girls became inseparable.

Dorothea particularly valued the resources of the hot-houses and gardens, which enabled her to have all the flowers and fruit which she desired as models, *when* she wished and *as* she wished. She had been so often thrown back in her work by the difficulty of affording the expense of peaches and grapes with the bloom on, roses cut in the dew, flowers of exactly the right hue just when she needed them,

and she flung herself eagerly into work now while these resources were unbounded around her.

Seeing her industry, and appreciating her enthusiasm, Lady Sarah proposed that she should utilize her drawings for the needs of the forthcoming bazaar in the neighbourhood, to which she would be expected to contribute handsomely. If Dorothea chose, she would pay her for all that she would do for this purpose, at a rate which her father should estimate, and, meanwhile, she should give Miss Courtney the advantage of her superior knowledge and training by working with her.

Who so happy as Dorothea now?

Miss Louisa Courtney became engaged; the London season ended. Lady Courtney wished to take her daughter to Scotland, where the family of the *fiancé* were grouse-shooting. Augusta was well provided for,

and her health improving; she might remain where she was for the present.

And Charles? Horace Selby, though not equal to his sister in energy, was by no means a fool. He had no intention of losing his chance of success in his examination by any idleness now. Mr. Jackson was well able to give him help which he needed, and was willing to do so. The three young men read pretty steadily for several hours a day; but, the work being completed, what so natural as that Selby should want to know how Steenie was going on,—what his father was doing,—how his mother was bearing the prolonged nursing?

What refreshment, after close application, equalled a good gallop upon a fine horse. Charles mounted him well; and, day after day, the two set off for a ride;—and, day after day, that ride brought them, sooner or later, into the neighbourhood of Polzeath.

Horace had much to say and to do there, but why Charles was always so ready to go in that direction was another matter.

Little Amanda, as has been said, threw off her illness after a few days; but Steenie battled on and on with the fell disease, now a little better, now much worse; always suffering extremely, in great danger for many weeks, and a terrible anxiety to his friends.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE OLD, OLD STORY.

From the moment when Charles Grenfell had looked upon May Selby, as she stood poised upon the rock in the cavern, singing, and gazing out upon the advancing waves with those sweet eyes thought-laden, —from that moment he had known that his affinity was there; that the girl standing before him was to be the dearest in the world to him for the rest of his life. He did not analyze his feelings, or perplex himself with reasoning as to the how or the why. He knew it; and from that time

his chief desire was to be near her ; to look upon her face ; to hear her voice ; to touch her hand.

Steenie's illness was, at first, a great obstacle to this end ; but, as the child began to recover, his state was of material assistance to him. While he lay between life and death, Mabel was too busy to see anyone. She was her mother's help, her father's comfort ; she had to prepare and pack the wardrobes of brothers and sisters for their absence ; she had to assist with invalid cookery, and take her mother's place when she lay down to rest. There was no time in which to see visitors.

But he kept himself in her thoughts even then. It was he who brought the hot-house fruit which the little invalid liked so much, fresh every day or two ; to him was owing the jelly and ice so grateful to the child's fevered mouth ; to him were her aunts, brothers and sisters, indebted

for their frequent knowledge as to how matters were progressing; he was the bearer of every parcel and note from Withiel. Mabel would have been lonely indeed without Horace and Dorothea, but for the frequent communications which he brought about.

At length the fever left the little boy, and a day arrived when Mrs. Selby, exhausted, lay down in the afternoon for a long sleep; Frank ventured to resume palette and easel among the rocks; nurse and the other servant were engaged in their 'housewife skep' in the kitchen, mounting guard also over Amanda and the baby; and Mabel, with the skeleton form of her little brother warmly wrapped in blankets, sat in the sun outside the house, rocking him in her arms, and singing to him softly, 'And the dove that sat upon the mast did mourn, and mourn, and mourn.'

A shadow fell across her, she lifted her

eyes, and saw young Grenfell standing before her, looking down on her with a smile. She had no consciousness about her; the idea of love had never yet occurred to her; her whole heart was full of her father, her mother, her sisters, her brothers. She only regarded him as the kind friend who had been so good to them through their trouble; and the innocent light of welcome flashed into her face as she made a movement to rise, but could not do so, the rocking-chair being deep, and her burden cumbersome.

'Don't rise, Miss Selby, pray don't,' said he. 'How does the young hero go on?'

'Better, are you not, dear?' replied Mabel, bending down to look at the little white face, in which the big blue eyes now seemed unnaturally large.

Steenie lifted himself up into a sitting posture, and put out a bony hand.

'You is the gentleman what came into the mine to fetch Mannie and me out, aren't you?' said he.

'Yes, my man,' said Charles. 'What made you go there?'

'We thought perhaps Aladdin had got his cave up there, and we could get some jewels and some money for papa.'

'Don't you know that you and your little sister are your papa's best jewels?' asked Charles.

'Is we?' said Steenie, looking at his sister.

'To be sure you are,' said she. 'You are never going there any more, are you?'

'No, never no more,' sighed Steenie, laying himself back again, tired already. 'Papa did say that if we did he would paint a picture of us as Kobolds, and then nobody would ever love us.'

'But, Steenie, you have not thanked

this kind gentleman for finding you and bringing you out.'

'Thank you, gentleman,' said the weary voice. 'Have you got anything nice for me to-day?'

'Steenie!' cried his scandalized sister.

'You did tell me that he brought me all those nice things your own self,' said Steenie, in self-vindication, 'and if he had got any more, I could say thank you all at once.'

'So you can, my son,' said the amused young man, silencing the reproach which he saw on the sister's tongue. 'And I have got a beautiful new picture-book for you to-day. Shall you like that?'

'Yes, I shall, better nor grapes. I'm tired of grapes. Thank you, sir.'

And hugging his new book, which he was too tired to look at then, Steenie dropped into a doze.

'I don't think that I know how to thank

you, much better than Steenie, for all you have done for us, Mr. Grenfell; but we do feel it most kind of you, and we will never forget it,' said Mabel, earnestly.

'Don't, don't now,' said Charles. 'It has been a pleasure which you cannot estimate.'

'We can never repay you,' continued Mabel, 'but at least I need not let you go away fasting this time, as I did on that dreadful morning. If you will come in, I will lay Steenie down on the sofa, and we will have a cup of tea. Papa is not far off, and would like to see you, if you could wait till he comes in.'

Charles had no objection at all, and they went into the shabby parlour,—so painfully quiet and orderly now,—where nurse soon brought tea, and Mrs. Selby came down to greet her visitor. Horace went to find his father, who returned with him, and Mabel made tea for all.

Frank Selby was himself again now, full of quaint jokes and hearty laughter.

'This Duchess of ours is treating you better to-day than she does sometimes, Mr. Grenfell,' said he. 'She is, as you had sad experience, no tea-totaller; she let you go totally without tea on a former occasion.'

'Mr. Grenfell believes in sincerity, papa. No empty compliments for him. He will always know for the future that when I say "Stay to tea," I mean a genuine offer.'

'In short, he likes empty cups better than empty compliments,' said her father.

'I like full cups when I can get them, sir,' said Charles. 'I hope that Miss Selby will often say "Stay to tea."'

'And see you in your cups?'

'Papa! Mr. Grenfell will not understand all your rude ways. You are very naughty this evening.'

But Frank was never naughty except when he liked his company. When he behaved with formal politeness, it was a sure sign that he was ill at ease from some cause. He was also apt to be sagacious in his likings and dislikings, and Mabel well understood that he had taken a fancy to their new friend, which caused her to lend herself the more readily to her inclination in his favour.

Mabel had a very grateful temper, and loved her own people dearly. To be kind to any of them was the sure way to her heart, and her affections were deep and true, though not shown much upon the surface. So quiet was she in her ways that, when all the others were at home, she was apt to be unheard among the more brilliant and noisy ones.

Dorothea was often thought by strangers to be the eldest, so much more ready was she to come forward and talk; but,

on such a rare occasion as this, Mabel was seen to advantage, for there were none to cast her into the shade. She wanted to make things pleasant to the young man who had done so much for Steenie, and whose people were making Dora and Horace enjoy themselves so greatly, so she exerted herself to talk of pictures and music and literature; bringing out all the things, new and old, with which her treasury of a mind was richly stored, in a way which Charles had never known anyone talk before. Her life in London, among artists and people of note, gave her much to say regarding celebrated men and women; she set up her father to relate anecdotes of them, and to give the secret history of many a picture and publication.

All this was a rare treat to young Grenfell, and that pleasant, quiet tea-drinking was prolonged till the sun set,

and gathering shadows warned the young men that it had long been time to go.

After that evening, a visit from Charles was a frequent event. He brought books and toys to Steenie and 'his little sweetheart Amanda;' he came with a message from Withiel; he came for a bathe; there was never an excuse wanted, and his presence became as familiar as that of Horace or one of the twins. More familiar than that of Horace after a while, for Horace was seized with a sketching mania, and was always in attendance upon the young ladies. Charles came alone.

So August sped away: it was time for the Selbys to return to town that they might be ready for the young ones to go back to school, and Horace to re-commence his studies in earnest.

Mrs. Selby had benefitted greatly from her sojourn by the sea, in spite of all

the anxiety which she had experienced there. Baby had taken quite a start, all the rest had thrown off their ailments; but Steenie, having recovered up to a certain point, improved no more, and his health was a very serious consideration.

Rheumatism seemed to have seized upon the child as a prey; he was racked with pain on every change of weather. There were swelling and enlargements of the joints; inflammatory symptoms now, danger of contractions then; weak action of the heart always; his appetite was uncertain and capricious; his strength did not return. It was all but impossible for him to have the proper remedies, suitable food, and constant attention which he needed at Polzeath; the house would be wholly unfit for him as soon as the summer weather broke up and the equinoctial gales began to blow; yet Mrs. Selby dreaded the idea of taking him

back to town—to close air, confinement to the house, London milk, and the noise of the streets. Better medical advice he could certainly enjoy there, warmer rooms, medicated baths; but his mother dreaded the winter before her most unspeakably.

She could not put such a charge upon her sisters-in-law, who were unused to little children, and who already had one constant invalid in the house. Besides, they had already had four of the young people there for two months, and their resources had been heavily enough taxed.

By the second week of September it was necessary for the family to be in London again, and the perplexity as to what was best to do for Steenie was great.

Did Charles divine this of his own accord? Was the difficulty to be read in Mabel's anxious eyes? Or did he piece together a stray word or two dropped in

his presence? There was no knowing; but a most unprecedented event occurred.

Charles took his mother out for a drive in an open phaeton, and persuaded her to go so far as Polzeath, and to call upon Mrs. Selby.

Such a thing had not happened for years as for Lady Sarah to drive to such a distance, and she rarely paid calls. She fancied herself too delicate. But she had been roused by the company of the young people. It had been a cheerful summer to her, and had done her good; while the pleasure of driving out with her son was a new one hitherto scarcely tasted.

In a *tête-à-tête* like this, Charles, being bent upon pleasing his mother and bringing her into a happy state of mind, exerted himself to talk his best, and she seemed to know more of him in that one drive than she had learnt in years of previous more formal intercourse when they were

always in the presence of servants, visitors, even Sir Theophilus. Never before had he been confidential with her, or told her anything of the thoughts and aspirations of his inner self.

Now, beginning with books which he had been reading, he spoke of his yearning to be something great.

'Do you know, mother,' he said, 'there are some advantages in being a fellow like Horace Selby. He has his course in life so plainly marked out before him, he has only to walk along it, he has no choice to bewilder him. Sometimes I wish that I too had to *be* something.'

'You have, my dear,' said she. 'You have to be a landholder, and study the good of your tenants. You might go into Parliament, and have your say in the great questions of the day. There is plenty for you to be.'

'Yes, but the more I think about it, the

more sorry I would be for Parliament if I were to go into it.'

'I do not understand you, my dear.'

'Why, mother, I should go into it with the best intentions in life, and want to do all sorts of things, but it would be something like taking out a young dog in a shooting-party, very apt to spoil the sport. And it is hard to tell what and who is right. Everyone seems to be right in part, but one has to join a party, and stick to it afterwards whether one agrees wholly with its leaders or not. No good is ever done by desultory single-handed measures; but when men work in concert, it seems as if they had to lop off a principle here and a prejudice there, till they lose all their individuality, and just become like any other in the crowd. And then there are so many sides to every question; and it is so hard to pursue a course that seems right without jogging

against all sorts of things where mischief may follow.'

'Perhaps study, and growing older, may enable you to see your course plainer.'

'Perhaps. It was something which passed at the Selbys' the other day which made me think. You know that story which so many people think so fine, where the girl leaves a luxurious home and goes to live among the East-End poor to do them good. They were reading it at Polzeath, I took it down to them. Well, Mrs. Selby laughed, and said that it was a man's idea of what was possible, and that a girl brought up like that *could* not have done things for herself in that way, and set wholesome example to persons in such a different rank of life all at once. Mr. Selby joked about Dame Partington; but somehow his jokes make one think afterwards, even if one laughs at the time.

Then Miss Selby said that it sounded very fine, on the surface, to lead a life of self sacrifice like that, but she feared that for a person to take his or her life in their own hands, and follow a course of their own choosing and planning, never answered. It can be made all right in a book, she said, but in real life it is wisest to wait for guidance. I asked whether that were not rather like offering a premium to self-indulgence, and letting abuses drift on, and she said that it might be. But her tone was doubtful, and I could not get her to explain herself; she said that she had no guidance towards the *rôle* of female preacher. Then something happened to stop the conversation, and I have been wondering ever since where my guidance will come from, and in what direction it may lead me.'

'To college first, my dear,' said his mother. 'Do your utmost at Oxford, and

fit yourself for it against the time when it will come. Those Selbys really are very interesting people. I wish that the mother were a better manager and a more sensible woman.'

'Mrs. Selby! More sensible! A better manager! Why, mother, those are the very things she is. There is no fuss there, but you should only just see how well she manages all those children, and how they all look to her, Mr. Selby and all!'

'I may be mistaken, I do not know her, but I thought——'

'Mother, don't think. Go with me and see her. She is so nice.'

Lady Sarah thought that it might be as well. These people were evidently influencing her son, and she would do wisely to judge whether for good or ill. So the horses' heads were turned towards the sea, and they drove into that sweet and peaceful bay.

All the family, in its reduced numbers, were gathered in the little enclosure outside the house. Steenie was trying to walk upon crutches for the first time. Alas! disguise it as his friends would, temporize and hope as much as they might, to this had the little fellow come. The doctor talked of time, of strength returning as he grew better; advised assistance for the present; but it all came to the same end. The manly, active little figure was never to run about as erst was its wont; the busy feet were never to come bustling and pattering in, as they used to do, any more.

But, for the present, the crutches were looked upon as an advance towards returning health, and the child was proud of them as of a new toy. He was making his slow, uncertain progress upon them across the little square; his father on one side of him, his sister on the other, with

outspread arms to save him should he make a false step; his mother bending in front, luring him on.

Lady Sarah and Charles, advancing up the path to the house behind them, saw the tableau thus for one minute; then Amanda, scampering to warn her mother of the visitors' approach, stumbled in her haste, knocked against the left-hand crutch and down went her little brother's helpless form. They ran forward, instinctively, but his father had him in his arms at once, and was soothing the nervous terror which caused a wail.

Lady Sarah's womanly heart went out to the little, drawn, white face that told of so much suffering, and all formality was forgotten in listening to Mrs. Selby's account of the illness and its cause.

'And now, my dear madam,' said her ladyship, 'what do you intend to do with him now? I hear that you are returning

to town shortly, but the dear little fellow does not look at all fit for the journey, or for the confinement to London air. You live in St. John's Wood, do you not? You are on the clay there; that is not good for rheumatic affections.'

'I know,' replied Mrs. Selby. 'In truth, we are much perplexed as to our right course. He cannot stay here much longer, and I do not know what to do.'

'Let him come to Tregarthen,' said Lady Sarah, impulsively. 'Let him come, at least, till you are quite settled at home again, and can make every arrangement for his comfort. He will be so far on his way to the railway-station, the journey will be thus eased for him when he does go, and we will make him as happy as we can. Change of air may give him an impulse towards a more rapid recovery, and he shall have the best of milk and everything which the doctor orders.'

'You are very good, Lady Sarah,' said Mrs. Selby. 'You have been so kind already.'

'Do not talk of that. Your daughter and son have been so useful that the obligation is all on our side, I can assure you.'

It was settled that Steenie should go to Tregarthen the day before the removal of the rest of the family. Mabel should go with him, to take care of him; the carriage should be sent for them.

Dorothea and Horace should rejoin the family at the station, and proceed to London with them.

'We have all grown so fond of that nice Miss Dorothea, my dear Mrs. Selby,' said Lady Sarah, 'I do not know what my niece would have done without her all this time'

Mrs. Selby made suitable acknowledgments, with a little secret perplexity in

her heart as to Mabel's toilette, which so sadly needed refreshment. She looked at her now, as she sat in the window, with Steenie on her lap, and young Grenfell leaning against the wall looking down on her, talking earnestly. The blue serge dress, that had been her chief stand-by during the whole time spent at Polzeath, had seemed good enough hitherto; but now, regarding it with the eyes of Lady Sarah, which she borrowed for the nonce, how worn and shabby it seemed. So, while her ladyship talked, in sweet condescension, the mother was privately wandering in drapers' shops, and planning how to set her daughter up in suitable garments at the most reasonable cost.

Another idea startled her also at this moment. With Mabel and her affairs full in her mind as they had not been for many a day, she suddenly perceived a something of *empressement*, a look in Charles Gren-

fell's face, a '*je ne sais quoi*,' which caused the intuition to flash upon her that he was in love with the girl.

With the Duchess? With her little girl? With Mabel, who had been her own baby such a short time ago, who was still almost a schoolgirl?

Even so. At her daughter's age she herself had been earning her own living for a twelvemonth, her landscape painter had come into her orbit, her idyllic life had commenced, she had even been just married.

Yes, she was no older than May when she had thought herself fit to take the duties of a wife upon her, and now it was the child's turn. She was greatly startled, but how charming a match it would be! Dear May, how sweetly she would grace the position, what a charming couple they look now, side by side. Both she and Frank liked this young man so much; and

what a fine thing it would be for the others !

But was it possible? Unworldly as Mrs. Selby was,—and, for all her ten children and her experience in life, she was still as innocent and single-hearted as one of her own babies—still she could not but think of the discrepancy in the eyes of the world between the social positions of the two young people. But, if this excellent match were offered to dear Mabel, if the young man loved her, and she loved him, he could well afford to please his own fancy, and what was, what could be, too good for that dear girl?

The young man showed his sense, that she must acknowledge. Mabel would be a fortune to any man; she would bring, with herself, qualities which would counterbalance all his money-bags.

Mrs. Selby was very ignorant of fine people's ways. Though her husband was

so rising an artist, and standing well in the race for wealth and consequence, it had been a very uphill struggle hitherto for him, with little private fortune, no helpful friends at his back, and heavily handicapped with so large a family to maintain and educate.

He declined all visiting, and she, with a young baby always to be considered, had gone into almost no society beyond an occasional visit to people of her own simple sort. She had but seldom entered a fine London home, nor had she seen Tregarthen. She knew that this would be a very great match for Mabel, but was wholly unable to estimate how great.

She thought herself remarkably worldly-wise in determining to say nothing to anyone of her surmise. All should take its course undeterred by watchfulness or comment from outside; but May's chances should not be lost for want of a pretty out-

fit to make her look as well as anyone there. She would write up to London at once for things. But what would be needed? Did girls wear tea-gowns, or only matrons? She had seen such pretty ones in shop windows, she had a vision of one in which Mabel would look so well. But, if it were an unnecessary expense, it might be better to give her a second dress for dinner instead. She could hardly get on for a month with only one; and there was so much else which the poor dear girl would need.

So the mother's thoughts wandered over many perplexities, while her tongue answered her visitor's civilities; and she was very glad when she took her leave.

Poor Mrs. Selby! She had not heard her sister-in-law describe Miss Augusta Courtney's five changes of dress a day, nor how seldom she appeared in one, a

second time, in exactly the same form as before.

Mabel's outfit was much needed, for she had let Dorothea have her best white dress to eke out her store, when she went to Tregarthen. Mrs. Selby stretched a point, and compassed both the tea-gown and the two dinner-dresses; one, certainly, being ingeniously resurrected from one of her own.

It was of black lace, and different coloured ribbons might be worn with it. The new one was white; and, with a pretty new silk also, she considered her daughter as handsomely set up.

Steenie's wardrobe was also refreshed; and the two were sent off with a mixture of anxious fear and loving pride conflicting in their mother's heart.

CHAPTER XVIII.

MABEL'S FIRST GLIMPSE INTO SOCIETY.

NEARLY a fortnight passed before all was ready for the Duchess and Steenie to go to Tregarthen, and the little boy had improved in strength the while, though very weak still.

That he required nearly a thorough new outfit was patent to his sister's eyes, for he had grown much during his illness, and the white and home-made linen suits which formed his chief wardrobe previously, were too thin for him now.

Mabel stitched away busily at new flannel undergarments for him, and new

sleeping gear. She knitted warm long stockings for the little man, and took immense pride and pleasure in embroidering a beautiful dressing-gown for his comfort, the pockets in which interested Master Steenie more than anything else.

Even the new black velvet suit and the one of blue serge which came down from London for him did not please him more, though he had never had a complete suit from a tailor before, and felt himself quite as much of a man as Horace, when the parcels arrived.

But though the Duchess plainly perceived her little brother's needs, and took pride and pleasure in slaving to supply them, and in setting off his beauty,—none the less remarkable for the great fragility which now characterized it,—she yet was a little surprised by the preparations made by her mother for her own appearance.

'I don't see that I want two dinner-

dresses, mamma,' said she. 'It is only staying in a country house with a kind old lady and gentleman. There will not be any company, you know. Mr. Grenfell said there would be nobody else staying there. Miss Courtney is going home, and even Aunt Rose will have returned to the cottage.'

'You don't know what you may not need in a month's visit, dear. You must keep your new white frock for best, or it will soil, and you will not be able to fit it up again there.'

'But there is the pink silk blouse that I made before we came down here, mamma! I have only worn it once.'

'Yes, dear, it would have been enough at home, I dare say. We could get things so easily and quickly in town, at any sudden need, but you will find no shops at Tregarthen, nor will you have anyone to help in running up anything new for

you, at short notice, should what you have fail you.'

Mabel submitted. She was too true a woman not to feel pleasure in having pretty dresses to wear; and she felt set up like a queen as she packed her frocks. Four new dresses, besides her former stock, constituted the most unprecedented extravagance! The possession of a tea-gown perfectly oppressed her with a sense of richness.

She kissed her mother gratefully, and set out with Steenie in great state, and some little excitement, for the first visit she had ever made alone.

Steenie was delighted to drive away in that luxurious barouche. After so long an illness, so much confinement to the house, how green and beautiful the lanes looked! His little tongue ran on in great excitement.

'Oh! Duchess, look! look! There are black-berries, like what Horace picked for

me. They are really growing in the hedge! What are those yellow flowers? I never saw any like them before. Oh! Duchess! there is the captain, it really is. Please let me stop to speak. Captain, captain, how do you do? How is Mrs. Captain? How is your big pig?'

'Your servant, miss,' said the honest old fellow, raising his hat to the young lady. 'Well, sir, I be main pleased to see 'ee again. 'Ee've had a cruel bad time of it, my pretty, that 'ee have. 'Ee be looking wisht still, but 'ee'll be able to ride the pig again soon, won't 'ee?'

'Oh! yes, very soon, and then I'll come and see you again. Give my love to Mrs. Captain, good-bye.'

But Steenie's excitement soon faded into fatigue. He was glad to be taken upon his sister's lap; where, wrapped up comfortably, he put his tired head on her shoulder, and fell asleep.

Mabel had time to look about her, and

realize the difference between the manner in which she was bowling over the road now, and that in which she was taken over the same ground on the occasion of her only previous drive there.

She thought of her driving the donkey-cart, with such enjoyment at her very recent escape from London streets, into the loveliness of those country sights and sounds. She thought of her father, jumping in and out to gather the wild roses; of his boyish delight in making her into the presentment of Queen Summer; of his gay spirits, and genial laughter over their simple jokes.

Dear father! She had noticed the silver threads so thickly in his beautiful beard as she bid him farewell. They had all appeared with the agony of his tender love for the child; with the anxiety, the fear, the apprehension from day to day. He had never been quite the same since the shock.

They drove through the little town of Withiel, past her aunts' cottage, where the girls were standing at the gate to wave their hands to her. They did not stop there, but turned in at a grand entrance, about a quarter of a mile further on, between large stone gate-posts, surmounted by heraldic monsters, and through beautifully wrought iron gates, thrown wide for their admittance to a magnificent avenue of beech-trees.

What giant boles! What delicious coolness! What lovely alternations of light and shade! What exquisite glimpses of glade and sweeping turf, and groups of trees, and glancing water, and deer reposing among the verdure!

The Duchess had not anticipated anything like this grandeur, she had not thought about Tregarthen at all, and great consternation took possession of her simple mind, so little used to splendour.

Had she realized, in the faintest degree,

the shyness which was to make her its prey upon driving through that lovely park, up to the grand old mansion of which she was to be the inmate for some weeks;—if she had formed any idea beforehand of the greatness which awaited her: the number of serving men, the dignity of the solemn butler, the extreme gentility of the maids, the fact that she would not unpack her own trunk, but would be obliged to submit all her little contrivances to the possible contempt of that very fine young woman who was so overpoweringly civil to her;—she would have remained at Polzeath, or run away to town, anything, to have escaped the ordeal.

She had not felt at all afraid of Lady Sarah, or even of Sir Theophilus, who was a stranger to her—it was the house and the servants who created her tremors when she saw them. But she possessed a brave spirit, and braced herself up to the effort

of concealing the palpitations which seized upon her.

Poor Steenie was extremely fatigued by the drive; he was fit for nothing but bed, and he could not help crying from weariness as he was undressed. Mabel felt re-assured by the tender manner of the genteel maid as she handled the poor child, and the cheerful voice in which she suggested pleasant thoughts to him.

'Poor little gentleman! He has been very ill, miss, has he not? But see, sir, how comfortable you will be when you are in bed, and Mrs. Symons has such nice cakes for your tea; and here is a little white doggie who wants to make friends with you. He will sit up and beg for some of those cakes, and you shall feed him.'

Steenie cheered up at sight of the dog, and tea refreshed him, but he was too much spent for enjoyment, and fell asleep while his sister was dressing for dinner.

Just as she was ready, Dorothea came running in.

'I could not come before, Duchess; indeed, I have only just heard that you had arrived. How is Steenie? Poor little man, how white he is! I did not seem to think before how ill he has been. Little darling! But I hope he will get on here. Lady Sarah quite fell in love with him; she talked of him all the next day. It seemed as if she could not put him out of her head.'

'And you, Dorothea dear, how are you?'

'Oh, perfectly well. I have so much to tell you, May; it seems such an age since I came here. May, how well you look! I don't mean that exactly, either, for you are paler and thinner, but how sweet and pretty.'

Mabel laughed. 'That is because of mamma's lace dress. See, don't you know it? She has had it done up again for me while I am here. Does it not look well?'

'Something makes you look well.'

'I am glad that you like it. I hope that I shall do;' making a little anxious backward movement, to display herself to her sister.

It was Dorothea's turn to laugh, but her laugh was not quite such a pleasant one as that of Mabel.

'Do! Oh, yes, anything almost will *do* for us here. You know——'

Mabel turned to look whether the maid was there, but she was discreet, and had retired when her work was ended.

'Well, dear, I know what?'

'Why, that we are a different order of beings from the worthy people here. Anything is good enough for us.'

'Dorothea! Are they not kind to you?'

'Kind? Oh, yes, excessively kind; that is just it. They never forget to be kind, but people are not exactly *kind* to those who are *kin* to them. I don't believe in that derivation of the word, May.

You won't, when you have been here for a day or two.'

'But, Dora dear, I hoped that you were happy here?'

'So I have been. It was rather a pill to swallow when I first understood how they looked on us all, but there was nothing in it when once I had the sense to gulp it down. It is common-sense, May, after all. We may have the same ancestor in Adam, but that is a long time ago, and people do alter with generations of training and development. We *are* not the same as they. We have not the same habits, or thoughts, or aims in life. They may be the better, or they may be the worse for it; I don't think they are the happier, but they *are* more—more—well, I can't exactly say what I mean, but we must make up our minds to it, May, and there it is.'

Mabel looked very thoughtful. It was

not altogether because of this new phase of life which Dora revealed to her, but that her sister had altered. She was more grown up, more self-reliant, a little harder in tone than the Dorothea of old. There was evidently a change, all Mabel's ideas required re-adjustment. But this was thrust away by her sister's next speech.

'I wish it were not all in such a hurry, I want a good long talk with you, Mab. Miss Courtney wants to take me to Italy.'

'To Italy! *You*, Dora! When? How? How splendid for you!'

'Well, you see, she is *very* delicate. Lady Sarah is anxious about her, and they think it necessary for her to be kept cheerfully amused, and employed and that. We have got on very well together—since I gulped down my pill—and she does not want to part with me. I do not like the idea of being a companion, for that is what it amounts to. I could not keep up the

dress and expenses required unless I accepted a salary; and it would be best to have it definitely arranged. I might save out of that, and having presents would amount to the same thing in the end. The position would be the same, virtually, minus the independence. But we should go to Paris first, and then to Hyères for the winter, and then to Italy, and be in Rome for Easter. All my expenses would be paid—my travelling expenses and living and that, I mean,—and I should share in Miss Courtney's lessons in Paris and elsewhere. I should be quite off papa's hands, and, when we come home again, I might have improved so much that I could really maintain myself by art. Do you think papa and mamma would let me go?'

'Dora! you take my breath away! Is Miss Courtney here now?'

'No, she went to her sister's wedding the day before yesterday. As soon as

that is over, she will talk to Sir Thomas Courtney about it, and refer it to papa. Lady Sarah thinks it such a good thing that she has quite asked me to accept. The aunts are delighted, they do not seem to see anything *infra dig.* about it. They are quite accustomed to looking upon themselves as inferiors, and accept the situation as a matter of course. It is only we who are proud, May.'

'Dear Dora! I could not bear for you to be mortified or patronised among these haughty people. We are very happy in London. Don't go.'

'But, May, I could not get these advantages without putting up with *something.* I do want to get on so. It will be all the same a hundred years hence. All the fine old artists had to bow before patronage, you know. But there is the dinner-bell, we must go down. I'll call Hawken to sit with Steenie, in case he wakes up. We will have a long talk when we come up

to bed, May. I have ever so much to tell you. Kiss me, dear.'

The sisters embraced fondly. Dorothea's artistic fingers re-arranged the ribbons on Mabel's dress, fixed a crimson rose in her hair; she stood back for a moment or two, looking at her, with her head now on this side and now on that, to see if anything further could be done.

'You will do, May,' said she. 'You are really very pretty, it never struck me before how pretty you are. Far more really so than Augusta Courtney, who is thought such a beauty.'

'Fine feathers,' laughed May, but her laugh was a little nervous.

'Come along,' said Dorothea, as the second bell sounded.

The two girls went down together.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

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